

Solution Focused Mentoring

5 Steps to bring out the best in your Mentee and yourself

Ella de Jong



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Solution Focused Mentoring: 5 Steps to bring out the best in your Mentee and yourself

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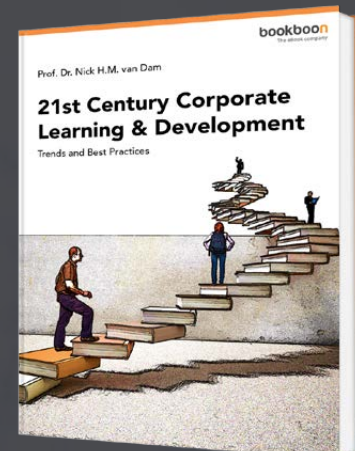


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Preface

As a young student, when I first heard about ‘minus 1 and minus 2’ in mathematics class, I instantly thought “I have to tell about this to everyone!” I felt so excited and was so amazed about the existence of those numbers. Wow, what difference that would make to all my future mathematics! **Simply realizing there are possibilities in a whole new and different direction...Wow!!**”

I hope to give you a taste of the possibilities of Solution Focused Mentoring. Perhaps for some of you, opening a possibility for a whole new perspective and direction...

As a colleague I’ve mentored new teachers.

As a coach I’ve heard about the need for mentoring in the business world.

As an uncertain person in a new working environment I’ve needed mentoring for myself.

As a friend I’ve noticed the need of mentoring in the creative, artistic world.

As a mother of two teenagers I’ve heard a lot about the mentors they’ve met during their school years.

As far as I know this is the first book about Solution Focused Mentoring.

I’d like to make you familiar with the idea in a brief way. Therefore it’s necessary to leave some important issues about the Solution Focused insights on a shelf. I really wanted it to be as brief and clear as possible for you. Brief enough to read it over and over again, clear enough to understand it instantly.

Meanwhile you can contact me for any question about Solution Focused Mentoring, The Solution Focused Approach, Solution Focused Coaching & Counselling and Helpful Communication Skills. My workshops and training are tailored to your learning desires. There will always be personal elements in it, like in this e-book. There will be a lot of original and creative assignments in it.

In the end you will be smiling, I assure you!

Smile,

Ella de Jong

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Introduction

Each word in the title of this book has great meaning. In this introduction, I'll explain to you in what way each word is important.

If you see a number between (), this means you can find the resource in the last chapter.

I write about your Mentee in a female form; refer to Mentee as a “she”. You can replace it with a male version, with “he”, if you prefer.

0.1 Solution Focused

It seems so obvious; aren't all people who want to be of any help focused on solutions? Actually: you would be amazed! Focusing on the Problem(s) is something that pops into the helping conversation almost unconsciously.

The roots of Solution Focused “Thinking” lie in Milwaukee USA, starting in 1978 where Steve de Shazer and Kim Insoo Berg worked closely together until Steve died in 2004. They were mentors for so many people working as therapists, counsellors, social workers, etc. Their revolutionary ideas spread all over the world in therapy, coaching, teaching as well as managing small and big businesses and organisations. In fact, **every situation** where there is a desire of changing something for the better is fruitful soil for the Solution Focused Approach.

The essence of the Solution Focused Approach is:

- To talk about resources and not about limitations & shortcomings
- To explore possible and preferred futures
- To explore what is already helping towards achieving these futures
- To have respectful conversations in which everyone is the expert in all aspects of his or her life, including the one who asks for guidance

a)

0.2 Mentoring

Mentorship is a “personal developmental” relationship in which a more experienced or more knowledgeable person helps to guide a less experienced or less knowledgeable person.

A Solution Focused Mentor has the same characteristics as a Solution Focused Therapist (or Coach or Teacher or...).

You are:

- warm and friendly
- naturally positive and supportive
- open minded and flexible to new ideas
- an excellent listener
- tenacious and patient

b)

As for the positive and supportive part, the Solution Focused Mentor is often told he/she “sees the good in people”. And as for the characteristic of being an excellent listener, as a Solution Focused Mentor, you have the ability to listen for clients’ previous solutions embedded in “problem-talk”; hearing the resources and not focusing on limitations and shortcomings.

I sincerely believe that next to the characteristics mentioned above, being optimistic and having the skill to create a smile by adding some lightness now and then, makes you the best mentor you can be. Although I didn’t view my six older brothers as great mentors (sometimes it was quite the opposite), they taught me everything about ‘putting things into perspective’. I have used this experience in mentoring in a fun and empathic way and have always seen a Mentee react with at least a glimpse of a smile. There is a lot of strength to be found inside when people are able to smile!

0.3 The best of your Mentee

The best thing you can get out of your Mentee is visible pride about what she has accomplished with or without your guidance.

- How would your Mentee (your protégé) want to be?
- What would she be ‘pleased’ with?
- How would she want to look back on her life?
- What would she say about her achievements?
- When did she ‘sparkle’?

Mentoring while your Mentee is at his or her best, means she is:

- cooperative
- open
- ready to try new things
- hopeful about the positive outcome from your collaboration
- respectful of her own feelings, thoughts and actions as well as of yours as her mentor’s

0.4 The best of you

The best thing about your Mentee and the best thing about you are quite similar.

The best thing you can get out of yourself is visible pride in what you have accomplished in your mentoring.

- How would you want to be?
- What would please you about your conversations?
- How would you want to look back on your mentoring life?
- What would you say about your achievements?
- When did you 'sparkle'?

While mentoring you are at your best when you are:

- possibility-focused
- genuine, authentic
- able to 'walk in your Mentee's shoes'
- respectful; non-labeling

As a Solution Focused Mentor you keep the following in mind:

1. the Mentee is the expert in every aspect of her life
2. listen to build, rather than to understand
3. focus on resources
4. explore the 'best possible goal' they, as Mentees, can imagine for themselves
5. stay curious about everything in your Mentee's life; be aware of every (little) contribution towards their desired (better) future; their goal.

0.5 5 Steps to bring out the best

The 5 steps are just like the 5 senses you use when preparing a dinner.

The dinner is the 'final product'; your Mentee's goal.

- | |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Taste: ask about their goal, make them describe it in detail.b. Hear: listen! Be eager to really know your Mentee and the context.c. Smell: what are good predictors of the best possible outcome?d. Touch: look for signs of progress.e. See: be aware of and celebrate the (pre-)successes. |
|--|

1 Step 1: Goal

The taste of dinner.
The goal of the Mentee.

Taste

When someone approaches and asks you for help and guidance, it's not always certain that they know exactly what they want from you. Help and guidance are abstract words.

Helping your Mentee to describe her goal in detail helps her get a clear view on what it is she wants to change in order to achieve her goal. It helps you as a mentor to stick with what the Mentee wants, nothing more, nothing less.

Let's think about it for a while:

When describing a lovely home made dinner, one seldom tells you what is NOT to be found in that lovely diner...

Imagine a friend wants your help, your suggestions when making dinner. He knows exactly what parts of the preparing process he needs your help on. He knows how he wants the dinner to be when it is finished: how it will look and taste.

1.1 Main point

A main point of Solution Focused Mentoring is questioning about the preferred future. A future in detail.

Don't want a traditional dinner? Oh, okay, please tell me what you want instead.

Whenever a Mentee is capable of making the description of "the dinner" in many ways, (not only the taste), she is able to see her goal in detail.

Details are very important because some of them are 'doable' while the goal looks undoable. Some details are still too big to consider doable. They need some more questioning, more examination.

After hearing the big goals, such as:

I want to perform very well on that presentation.

I want to be able to get more work done.

I want to get that job.

I want to communicate better as a manager.

I want to get good grades.

Your questions will look like:

- You want to be a better manager? Can you tell me what you would be doing as a better manager, what would we notice?
- You don't want to be so nervous when giving a presentation? How would you want to deliver a presentation, instead of being nervous?
- You want to give the best performance on stage you've ever made? Sounds great, would love to come and watch. Where would it start? On stage or before you come on stage?
- You want to get better grades and finish school? When would you notice that you're on the way of getting there? (Ah, yes! There you are talking to me! That's a good start!)

Ask as much “**Wh-questions**” (**what, where, who**, etc.) as you want, repeat them several times and more importantly, ask the question “what else?”

Avoid the “why question”, most times it feels like an acquisition.

Here is what to ask:

- where
- what
- who
- when
- how
- what else?



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For example:

- How will you know your presentation went very well? (What else? What else?)
- What will your attendees' reaction after your good performance be? (What else? What else?)
- Where will you feel comfortable preparing for this presentation? (Anywhere else? Anywhere else?)
- Who would be the first to notice that you are going to give a good presentation? (Anyone else? Anyone else?)
- How would you know your communication was getting better? (How else? How else?)
- What would your employee's reaction be after you did well? (What else? What else?)
- When would you notice the first sign that you will have a good conversation? (What other moment? What other moment?)
- Where would you feel comfortable preparing for this conversation / having this conversation? (Anywhere else? Anywhere else?)
- Who would be the first to notice you are communicating better? (Anyone else? Anyone else?)

To make every mentoring contact useful, a Solution Focused Mentor will start every 'Mentor-Mentee-conversation' with the same sentence. The most beautiful way to get to know the taste of the dinner that day; the goal of that moment, is by asking:

"What are your best hopes from this conversation?"

a)

How does your Mentee want to walk out of your office after the conversation?

- Will she have a new plan for a part of her goal?
- Will she feel at ease, more relaxed?
- Does she know what to do next?
- Does she have an idea of how much time she needs to...?

Having heard the answer, you as a mentor know for sure that both of you are headed in the same direction.

1.2 Value, attitude & skills

What is the value of making a detailed descriptions of the goal?

It makes the goal doable.

It shines a light on a 'step by step' process.

It energises, Mentees hear themselves talk about such tiny details, things that are already within their reach to achieve! Even more: they are already on their way!

What attitude do you need to get as much description as possible?

Your attitude as a Solution Focused Mentor is a simple one:

You are curious.

You, in order to help and guide your Mentee, really want to know (listen to) little details.

You really want to know everything about the goal, the whole context.

What skills do you need to have to get as much description of the goal as possible?

Important skills of a Solution Focused Mentor are:

- persistent questioning,
- mainly asking questions about actions,
- asking questions involving the important context of your Mentee's life,
- persistent questioning to make "everything clear" for your Mentee.

1.3 True story & task

A true story:

Struggling to make my private practise lucrative, I was in search of all kind of mentors who could guide me to the dollars I needed. Almost all of them were genuinely interested in me and would ask questions about my passion and my successes so far. And then 'my part' stopped. They stepped in and gave me advice about all the things I could do to make money.

Some of my mentors were talking out of their own experience, they 'had been there' and knew exactly what I had to do (or stop doing). Others had been to all kinds of seminars and had followed webinars about how to make a living on coaching and counselling in a private practise. They knew what I had to do because others were successful in that way, or so they'd heard. The mentoring didn't work for me.

Coincidentally (this was absolutely not a nice coincidence) I was faced with another personal goal. It was in line with my earlier goal but now it was far more coherent with my whole context. This gave me hope and energy to go for it! This felt so good!

I am grateful for all my mentors, they really wanted to help me. I am also grateful for the coincidence (that was: suddenly becoming the teacher of final year students). Without that experience I would perhaps still be struggling.

Of all the things I've done, the most vital is coordinating those who work with me and aiming their efforts at a certain goal.

Walt Disney

Task

Ask yourself ‘The Best Day Ever’ question.

Imagine yourself waking up tomorrow and everything is how you would want it to be; your goal is achieved. Problems are solved or you know how to deal with them. You have your best performance ever on that day. Would that please you?

What would be different?

Tell yourself how it would look like in detail. Walk through the day from opening your eyes in the morning until closing them late in the evening. Take small steps in describing the day. What are you thinking, feeling, doing? How do others react?

Notice the steps you take in describing the details. There are gaps in time between every description. Can you tell what happens during these ‘gap times’? Don’t go too fast! Describe every detail!

I hope you notice there is almost always a detail to be found that would be different.

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2 Step 2: Context

Hear what's cooking!
Listen to the context of your Mentee's goal.

Hear

Besides wanting to know all about your Mentee's goal, you also want to hear her talk about the rest of her life. At least some part of it. What is the context of her goal?

Of course you want to know everything related to the goal: her work (her colleagues at work, the kind of work she has, the working hours, her boss, etc.), about her school (grades, teachers, subjects etc.). How has she managed to come this far? What has she achieved so far?

Besides that, it is very important to know 'everything else' about her life. She is more than the problem; the question that has brought her to you. She wants guidance in a certain part of her life. In other parts she is perhaps someone who guides others, or she may have issues she's dealing with on her own. What makes her happy, makes her whistle or hum? What makes her smile?

Let's think about it for a while:

Imagine your uncle is preparing dinner for a small group of people and suddenly he is asked to make dinner for a lot of people including children.

Most of us would feel uncomfortable and think frantically about how to make it a nice dinner. You, on the other hand, know your uncle was a schoolteacher. If he panics, he calls you for help and asks you how he is supposed to manage this. You'll probably help him a lot by remind him of the "good old days" in school. How did he manage in school? An environment where there is a constant flow of change? (My guess, his first answer is: "Stay calm" 😊) You know your uncle! You know what he likes, what he is good at. You have heard him talk about that when visiting him and...by really listening to him.

2.1 Main point.

This is another main point of Solution Focused Mentoring: observe the whole person.

You have a holistic view of your Mentee.
You want to know your Mentee. You want to know what is important to her.
Who and what can make her smile?
What fun things does she do?
What is she interested in?
Who is important to her? Family? Friends? Teachers?

To guide a Mentee in the most effective and respectful way, you want her to use her own resources and her own strengths. Some of them are hidden. Only when she wants to tell you about her life do you get to know the context in which she asks for guidance. By really knowing her, possibilities of hearing her recourses and competence emerge.

In case your Mentee cannot think of anything else but her goal, such as

- “giving a great performance on stage”, or
- “becoming more assertive and getting the chance of becoming a senior” or
- “giving good presentations”, or
- “getting co-workers to finish their work on time”, or
- “finishing studies on time”, or
- “how to avoid being sent out of class” etc.,

you can mention the following areas of life that almost everyone will feel connected to. It is not to be seen as a questionnaire in which your Mentee must tell you everything important about each area. You can keep it in mind or write it down for later in case your Mentee has difficulty finding something else to talk about beside her goal.

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Family○ Friendship○ Sport○ Membership○ Work/Education○ Religion/spirituality○ Recreation/fun |
|--|

d)

When you ask about fun things in your Mentee’s life, your Mentee usually opens up and wants to talk about it. They like to answer your questions even though it seems irrelevant to them. They are used to thinking about their goal and everything that has a close connection to it. Sometimes it makes them depressed because they cannot see any progress.

When Mentees feel free to talk about other important things in their lives, they are more likely to see their problem (reaching their goal) with perspective. While hearing themselves mentioning all kinds of positive characteristics used in different circumstances, their self-esteem mostly rises and their minds are more open to new ideas or new insights.

Here is a quote out of a blog for managers – wouldn’t it also be perfect in a blog for mentors?

“Positive comments and conversations produce a chemical reaction (----) They spur the production of oxytocin, a feel-good hormone that elevates our ability to communicate, collaborate and trust others (...).”

From:

The Neurochemistry of Positive Conversations

by Judith E. Glaser and Richard D. Glaser

<http://www.creatingwe.com/news-blogs/harvard-business-review/767-the-neurochemistry-of-positive-conversations>

2.2 Value, attitude & skills

What is the value of stimulating your Mentee to tell about her context?

- It opens up your Mentee's mind to new ideas.
- It makes the conversation enjoyable.
- It is an eye-opener in terms of knowing there is more in life than this one goal.

What attitude do you need to stimulate your Mentee to tell about her context?

- Your attitude as a Solution Focused Mentor is again one of curiosity.
- You listen with a constructive ear; you listen to build.
- You don't have to understand everything your Mentee does.
- You are not judging.
- You want to detect what is useful for achieving her goal.

What if you could build your future and create the future?

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What skills do you need to stimulate your Mentee to tell about her context?

As a Solution Focused Mentor you (a):

- Know how to take turns and make every conversation a respectable one.
- Invite your Mentee to talk freely (in detail) about her life with non-verbal expressions.
- Choose your words carefully. For instance use her language while asking whether you have understood her correctly.
- Listen and meanwhile try to “walk a mile in her shoes”. Listen to her point of view/her way of seeing things.

2.3 True story & task

A true story:

Having my office in a building full of entrepreneurs in various kinds of (small) businesses, we tend to knock on each other’s doors when feeling stuck.

I notice that it depends on the question you have: whether you go for guidance or an uplifting word to the people who know your context or the context of your request.

I love to talk to my colleague who is a Theatre Coach. She quickly knows what I want to change. She is able to revere to our shared passion: improve theatre. She mentions situations on stage (or while in training) compared to what I talk to her about. Doing so I can see and feel how my ‘stuck-ness’ can be solved!

Task

Write down 5 contexts of 5 people you know. You should know a few things about them, such as:

What is important in their lives?

What worries them?

What makes them smile?

Train yourself in order for them to want to reply to your questions.

Questions you ask because you’re really interested!

Have you had a nice conversation?

What were very nice moments?

Write down the whole context of the very nice conversations.

3 Step 3: Predictors

This really smells good!
Signs of a good outcome for the goal in mind.

Smell

A nice smell makes most people smile instantly. I love it when a Mentee starts to smile. There's a whole book I could write about the positive influences of a smile...In terms of predicting it is going to be a nice dinner, you can tell a lot from the smell coming from the kitchen.

When in a Mentor-Mentee relationship, you as a Solution Focused mentor need to be able to sense a good smell regarding her skills, her attitude, and the resources needed to reach her goal. This will anticipate on whether your Mentee will make good progress and will be able to reach her goal.

Let's think about it for a while:

A good friend of yours loves to bake. He has now set his mind on making a dinner with a lovely dessert of delicious cakes, but he is unsure about the main course and the entrée.

Because you know him very well, you are able to "hear him out" about the time he started baking. You know he has always loved creating lemonades and cocktails. What made him decide to 'go for it', go for the baking? What skills used by creating mixed drinks did he also use when baking? What did he like about the baking? When did his baking become successful?

When describing his former thoughts, feelings and actions that lead to his successful baking, he feels energized and thinks more positively about his skills that will make him succeed in making a fine dinner.

3.1 Main point

A main point of Solution Focused Mentoring: explore what is already working related to the desired goal of your Mentee.

What worked? That's what we are interested in as Solution Focused Mentors!

We sincerely believe that when "nothing worked", there is an exception screaming to be found.

When it has worked once, it can be done one more time.

When there was once an exception, it can happen again.

As I wrote in the Introduction, a lot of mentors are focused on problems. What went wrong and how come? Using the Solution Focused Approach means that you as a mentor are aware of the problems and that in the meantime you focus on everything that can help avoid the problems, overcome them or find out how to 'live with them'.

You can easily notice the difference in problem focused mentoring and solution focused mentoring. For me it has very much to do with energy and hope.

How much energy is there to be found in a Mentee when her mentor is mainly discussing all of her shortcomings and failures? Where is the energy to be found when the conversation is about all the things that didn't work? Most of them are known already ☹. With what kind of energy and hope will a Mentee make new efforts in trying to make progress towards her goal?

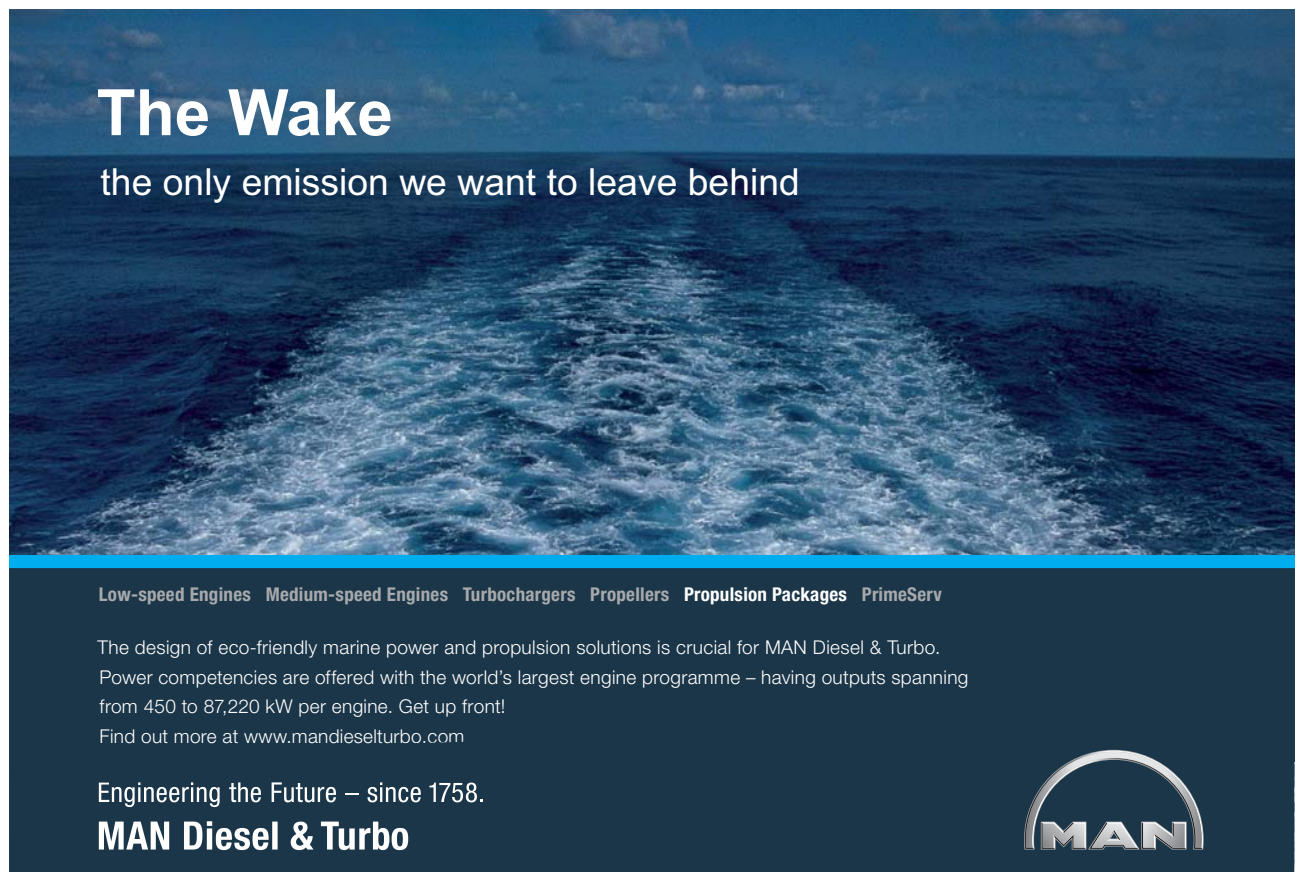
What if the Mentor-Mentee had a conversation about what did work? (Even if this happened only once.) When the two of you talk about it in every little detail. A conversation about the resources which are already there will help achieve your Mentee's goal. Does your Mentee need to look for energy? Does she possess the hope that her goal can be reached? Does she desire to work on her goal and make new efforts?

Because you know your Mentee's goal in detail, you know exactly where to look. You are focused on every single nice smell. You can smell a resource coming from the most unusual places; from miles away; from years ago!

As a Solution Focused Mentor you see opportunities and look for exceptions. You ask about former successes that are related to the goal. A beautiful way of enlightening your Mentee's competence of your Mentee is by asking:

“What would others say you are good at?”

Questions about obtaining details about (pre-) success:




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- “What happened?”
- “Were you surprised it happened?”
- “When did it occur?”
- “Where did it happen?”
- “How did it happen?”

Questions about useful qualities contributing to the (pre-) success:

- “What is it about you that...?”
- “What would others say it is about you that...?”
- “Are there other situations in your life in which this quality played a role?”

If your Mentee loves to cook, you could hear answers such as:

“They would say I’m good at planning, finding the most special ingredients, using the right amount of ingredients (by using my intuition and experience and not simply following the recipe), making use of utilities (sometimes in a creative way). They’d say I am very clean and organized.”

I suppose you can see different useful resources in an organisation, useful for a manager and a student and an artist and...and...Let them talk more about the detail of ‘their good planning ability’. About ‘using their experience’. About ‘finding special ingredients through alertness and perseverance’.

3.2 Value, attitude & skills

What is the value of detecting resources and competence?

- It makes your Mentee feel competent.
- It enables your Mentee to (re) discover hope.
- It shines a light on possibilities.

What attitude do you need to detect resources and competence?

- Being tenacious and patient.
- Being curious. You really want to find out what works for your Mentee.
- Being optimistic. You absolutely want to detect previous successes and strengths even when you hear the “problem-talk”.

What skills do you need to detect resources and competence?

As a Solution Focused Mentor you are:

- Patient. You ask questions most Mentees are not used to. They need time to think! Show in your non-verbal communication that you will give them time to think, start writing something down on a piece of paper or start typing (doesn’t matter what J).
- Creative. You can see possibilities to utilize a thinking/acting/feeling skill of your Mentee noticed in a completely different context, but still very useful in the goal’s achievement. You are creative in pointing in the resource’s direction, so your Mentee can find it all by herself and decide whether to use it or not.
- Persistent. You really want to smell the ‘good stuff’, you want your Mentee to notice it, to get the smell of a nice dinner as it starts to be prepared!

3.3 True story & task.

A true story:

When I was a schoolteacher, I transferred to a different school and age group of children. I had been a teacher for 30 years already and had worked with various age groups of children as well as in various kinds of education systems and teams. I could say there have been mostly good times, especially in my classrooms. But this time it was far, far from good! I knew what I wanted and I even knew that I had enough skills and resources to make it work even in this new setting. And yet...nothing worked. I felt desperate!

Fortunately my co-worker kept on asking me questions like:

“Did all the kids work that bad?”

“Well, no, not all of them...”

“Did some kids behave nicely?”

“Well, yes, a few of them...”

“Ah, so, a few were nice!”

“Where there times today when things didn’t go badly?”

“Well, when we all worked on our art assignment...”

“Okay, what else?”

“There were also 8 minutes of quiet time when they were doing maths...”

“Okay, what else?”

“And, well...”

These kinds of questions gave me a lot of hope and after 3 months I had reached my goal. This was thanks to my Solution Focused Mentor!

“Problem talk creates problems, solution talk creates solutions”

Steve de Shazer

Task

Find as many mentors as possible who are able to make their Mentees stay hopeful.

Who do you know (in your present and past life) who is/was able to make you see that things were still working out?

Do you know people who have done a great job for someone else?

Don’t forget that mentors are to be found everywhere!

4 Step 4: Progress

Stay in touch with what you have done so far!
The Solution Focused gentle touch of a conversation.

Touch

When you are cooking a nice dinner, you usually need to put a fork into the beef, the potatoes and the vegetables to find out whether they are ready.

Being in a Mentor-Mentee relationship you, as a Solution Focused Mentor, want to let your Mentee know how close she is to being “ready”.

Let's think about it for a while:

Your friend is busy preparing dinner. There is food in the oven and in the pans. You are asked to “poke” and inform the others whether the food is okay. Before you can do this, you need to know whether the food should be crispy or soft...Otherwise, without information about the influence of heat, how long it's been cooking etc., you will not know how much longer it needs.

The advertisement features a circular logo on the left with three stylized human figures in the center, surrounded by gears and four arrows pointing clockwise. To the right of the logo, the text reads 'UNLEASHING CHANGE MANAGEMENT' in large, bold, blue letters. Below this, it says 'OCTOBER 18 & 19, 2018' and 'DE RODE HOED AMSTERDAM'. At the bottom, there is a silhouette of a cityscape with a windmill and a bridge. In the bottom left corner, the text 'Global Executive Events' is visible.

Actually, the cook could do this much better by himself! He knows the whole process. You definitely want to help him, but preferably by looking at him and telling him he is doing great and pointing at things that can be of use. You certainly don't know anything compared to what he has already achieved towards this great dinner. Perhaps you would like to hear about every item of the diner: "On a scale from 0 tot 10, where are we now?" Of course you don't want to distract him, but it would make the process clearer for you. Most cooks reflect like that (by scaling) on their progress of making a diner in an instant.

4.1 Main point

One of the main points of Solution Focused Mentoring is scaling.

Putting the scale 'into action', the Mentee and the Mentor have a clear view on the process towards reaching the goal. It is all about the described goal – no more, no less.

I know scaling is used in all kinds of (business) settings like coaching, managing, teaching, therapy etc.

Let's look at two different ways of questioning:

You are asked to point out on a scale from 0–10 where you stand right now as a mentor. 0 stands for 'a very poor, unhelpful mentor' and 10 stands for 'you are the mentor you want to be'. Just imagine you would say you are at 6.

Think about **the next question**:

- A. "What do you have to do to get on 7?"
- B. "What have you already done; what makes it a 6?"

Most people feel stressed, worried when trying to answer a question like A. They don't know or don't like to give the answer because they know it will be a hard nut to crack for them and they don't like the idea. There is a reason they are a 6, but they can't usually say why.

The beautiful, respectful way of scaling mentioned in B does wonders in every setting! Solution Focused scaling questions like B help to make your Mentee feel competent about her achievements, which are **all connected to her goal**. And competence is what we all need! What is more, the Mentee herself is mentioning her competence. This has a very positive influence. When they are asked question B, Mentees are more able and willing to answer. Even though it involves a lot of reflection!

You can introduce the scale when you both know the ins and outs of the goal your Mentee has in mind and you have heard some nice things about her life and her interests. In this example I use the most common scaling: scaling by numbers. Here is an example of how the scaling conversation could go:

1. On a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 stands for “nothing” and 10 stands for “all”, where would you say you are?
2. Can you tell me what’s in the part of 0 tot the number you mentioned?
3. What else?
4. What else?
5. What else? (repeat at least 11 times!)
6. What would you notice about yourself when you would be a bit higher on the scale?
7. Would that please you?
8. What would others notice about you?
9. What else would they notice?
10. What else?
11. Have you ever been there before?
12. Do you think it is possible for you to get a bit higher on the scale?

Even if your Mentee has a fall back and says that last week she was at a minus 20, you, as a Solution Focused Mentor can still be of positive help. But only if you are genuinely interested! You may ask (after acknowledging the rough week she’s had): “Please, tell me. What makes it a minus 20 and not a minus 30 or minus 40?”

It’s beautiful to hear your Mentee tell you about things that could have gone even worse than what already happened. By hearing themselves speak, they feel somewhat enlightened, for it could indeed have been worse. What did they do to prevent to happen?? So they *are* capable of certain things! So there is, even in times of despair, still a crack of light coming in!

There are endless ways of scaling your Mentee’s progress. By listening to her interests in rock climbing, being part of a large family, being a skilled chess player, you can use a scale in a more descriptive way. For a Mentee who has grown up squeezed between several brothers and sisters, you could make a scale like: “Let’s imagine a scale where being the youngest who is hardly able to speak stands for a horrible presentation and where being the eldest, wisest and most experienced stands for giving a perfect presentation – where are you now?”

4.2 Value, attitude & skills

What is the value of Solution Focused Scaling?

- It is confidence building.
- It builds strength.
- It highlights exceptions and resources.
- It helps internalizing the process. Using a visible scale of numbers or more metaphorically a mountain, a road etc. makes it easier to internalise for your Mentee. What is internalised is stronger and will ‘last longer’.

What attitude do you need to have using Solution Focused Scaling?

1. Your attitude as a Solution Focused Mentor is one of never ending optimism.
2. You hear the good things even when listening to a problem.
3. You believe everyone is able to progress and has moments of success.
4. You remain optimistically curious. What did your Mentee do/think/feel that is most helpful for reaching a higher level on a scale?

What skills do you need to have using Solution Focused Scaling?

As a Solution Focused Mentor you are:

- Great in timing. You use the words your Mentee uses. By doing that, you will ask the right questions on a perfectly fitting scale for your Mentee.
- Patient. It takes time for your Mentee to think about what has already worked, to find the words that fit with her feelings, thoughts and actions.
- Quiet, very quiet. You shut up and listen. It is hard (I know!!) but the reward will be huge, as your Mentee's own words will make her process so much clearer for her. Far more than your words could do!

4.3 True story & task

A true story:

I once gave this training: “Your VOICE, your plan!”

The attendees came with a plan, a goal they did not tell me about. I had laid out assignments for them to do. They could work together or alone.

It was all about resources, visualizing the future (with the plan, the goal achieved), looking inside and celebrating.

The feedback I got was that everyone was impressed by what they had already done to make their plan work (and make their dream come true). It was such a relief for all of them! They all enjoyed it very much.

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In my mind I still see them standing for a long time, looking at the numbers from 0 to where they were standing at that moment. Looking inside themselves. Allowing themselves to really get in touch with what was already there...

I think a simple rule of business is, if you do the things that are easier first, then you can actually make a lot of progress.

Mark Zuckerberg

Task

Create 10 different scales for yourself in which Mentees would recognise their context.

Example:

A junior manager wants to communicate more clearly, he puts in a lot of time listening to his co-workers but seems to fail engaging them to listen to him. Tasks are not done at all or are done insufficiently. He has just become a father, loves his family life and loves competitive mountain biking.

The scale:

If 0 stands for a bad skill in sending clear messages, (for example you are babysitting all the time, and won't be mountain biking for years) and 10 stands for your communication being absolutely clear to everyone (there is a perfect balance between time for the baby and time for your hobby), where would you say you are now?

5 Step 5: Successes

Wow, look at that!
Visualise and celebrate your successes!

See

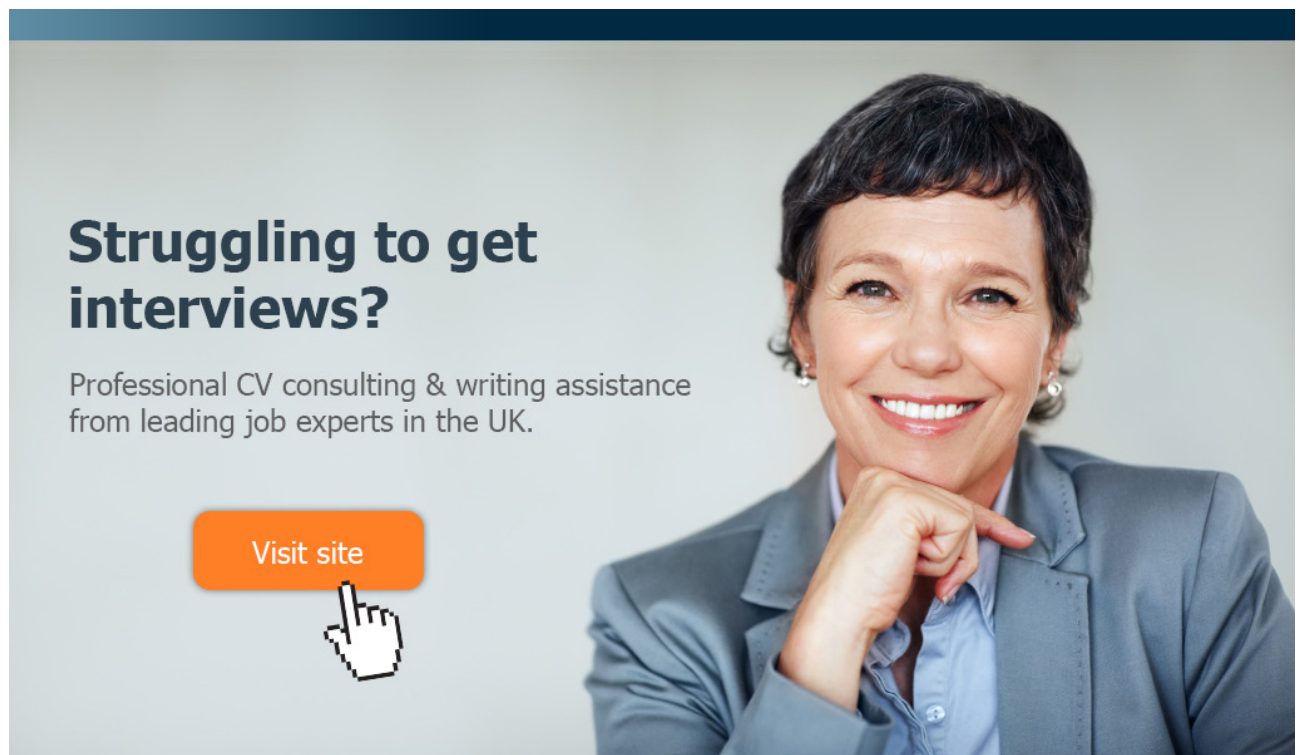
I hope you are able to see your Mentee shine!

Shine as in giving a great performance on stage, communicating very well with co-workers, giving inspirational presentations, becoming a senior in the business, getting good grades, managing to stay in class, etc.

But more importantly, I would consider: was there a change where you could actually see or hear the outcome of your Mentee in:

- Coping with a problem?
- Facing a challenge and knowing what to do?
- Moving forward and keeping their head up in spite of previous failures?

For me those times, those moments are the most beautiful to be part of (to hear about).



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Let's think about it for a while:

When guests see at a dinner that's ready to be served, it's easy for them to have an overview of all lovely menu items. Hopefully they will tell the cook he did a wonderful job. "Look at that nice brown crust! See those beautiful, natural coloured vegetables! Look at the fine structured sauce!"

Sometimes the guests are really interested in the cook's achievements and they want to know more. They ask: "**How did you do that?**"

- We wonder, because you didn't have much time.
- We wonder, because you have never done this before.
- We wonder, because you tried before and have failed 3 times.

"Please, tell us!" That's when the cook highlights the especially delicious parts of the menu. Meanwhile, everyone is celebrating the cook's success by enjoying the dinner.

5.1 Main point

One of the main points of Solution Focused mentoring is the Mentee highlighting and celebrating her success.

As a Solution Focused mentor you want your Mentee to notice her (pre-) successes.

Even the smallest successes are worthwhile celebrating.

In fact, by saying out loud the smallest detail of success is already, I think, a way of celebrating it.

Questions you could ask:

- "How did you do that?"
- "How did you accomplish it?"
- "How did you cope?"
- "Are you happy with it?"
- "Does it make you smile (inside)?"
- "How does it make you feel about yourself?"
- "Did it surprise you?"

- "What happened right before you made this/that decision?"
- "What did you think, feel, say, do that led to this positive outcome?"
- "Do you see what you have achieved? Did you already dance around the office? Did you spell out the word **Great!**? Did you...?"

At every new appointment or accidental meeting, the Solution Focused mentor should ask:

What has been better since we met?

Mention the good things.

By describing the things that worked, they get visualized by your Mentee. How she did well. She probably will smile of pride or thankfulness or just because she is satisfied. It builds her self esteem.

Complimenting your Mentee about her successes, persistence, humour, patience, stubbornness etc. is best done by inviting everyone involved. Let them give their opinion about all that is good. “What would your manager say about your persistence if I asked him? Would he be glad with your persistence, you think?”

For you as a Solution Focused mentor it is enough to say “wow” or nod your head and show your admiration. You are simply passing by. You are a friend of a friend, invited to come over for dinner. How nice is it to observe how your Mentee’s real friends, including her dog, will react on her accomplishments. That is really meaningful!

An example of celebrating successes just by yourself:

I once asked teachers whom I mentored how they would like to celebrate their success. Their ages varied from 23 to 46. At first they almost all looked puzzled, but when I mentioned their hobbies the smiles came in and they knew what they wanted: new football shoes, a concert ticket, a day of shopping with their daughter etc. They had their goal and wanted to work for it, but it was also fun to know they would give themselves a nice gift as well!

5.2 Value, attitude & skills

What is the value of mentioning and celebrating successes?

- It is internalized and stays with your Mentee even in times of failure and frustration.
- It empowers.
- It creates smiles.
- It enables your Mentee to be proud even before she has accomplished her goal. Pride relates to self-esteem. Self-esteem relates to self-consciousness, which is an excellent predictor for success.

What attitude do you need to make your Mentee mention her successes?

- Your attitude as a Solution Focused Mentor is a giving attitude:
- You really want your Mentee to get the best out of herself!
- You want to give her all the insights and strengths she needs to succeed.
- You want to give compliments for every small success.
- You know she is the expert of her life and her goal.
- You are eager to create awareness about her skills and resources useful for her goal.

What skills do you need to make your Mentee mention her successes?

As a Solution Focused Mentor you:

- Are persistent. Here it is again. Don't take "I don't know" for an answer. At least not the only answer. "I just did it. I don't know..." Wait for other words to come out.
- Acknowledge it has not been easy sometimes (use your Mentees words! Like: "it was hard" or "it was tough") and yet she was able to...
- Point in the right direction. Where and when have successful steps already been made?
- Ask questions in the right direction. How did you do that? Who would say "well done!?" (Your pet can join in!). What pleases you in their reasons of thinking "Well done!?" What else?

5.3 True story & task

A true story:

The need for compliments; creating my own applause.

One fine day I went to the school principal at the school I'd worked at as a substitute for several months. I had to work closely together with several co-workers. Every few months there was a shift and I worked with someone new (as if it was the most natural thing to do for me). Actually, I thought I had done very well: there were no arguments or frustrations.



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I thought the principal didn't know how to value such a flexible substitute and I wrote a few words on a piece of paper and put it in an envelope. I walked to the principal's office and asked him to open the envelope and read what was written out loud. After looking somewhat puzzled, he accepted my request and opened the envelope. So I heard him say: "Well done, Ella! You are capable of collaborating in a positive way with very different co-workers. Again: well done!" ☺

I thanked my principle with a big smile and walked away, feeling great!

Mentoring in schools (and in a lot of other places!) is not widespread and when someone fits in smoothly there is this very common idea (opinion) that no mentoring is needed. I had to make my own compliments (my own celebration) but, and this may sound crazy, I needed to hear it from someone else...

Quote from YouTube: **mentor singer**

Billy Joel and Michael Pollock

<https://www.facebook.com/Wimpcom/posts/852432538117216>

Randy Hodges: A beautiful piece of velvet never looks as good as when a new piece of cut diamond is displayed on it... **mentoring works!**

Billy Joel is awesome. Seems to **genuinely enjoy mentoring** up and coming musicians as well. I hope Michael gets a gig or two out of this!

1 · 29 maart om 22:00

Task

1. Take five successes. You can choose from your own life or from others.
2. Write down what you think would be the "battles" that have been won along the way to success (challenges to deal with etc.). In other words: the successes needed to get the one you've chosen.
3. Ask several people what they think are the pre-successes.
4. Do you hear the same pre-successes? Great!
5. Do you get other pre-successes as answers? Even better!

In both situations (4 and 5) you have trained yourself to see (hear and see) what it takes to be successful. Not everyone sees or can see the same challenges in success. Keep that in mind while guiding your Mentee.

P.S.:

Success doesn't have to be winning the Nobel Price! Every success counts!

6 Conclusion

This is the final chapter of **Solution Focused Mentoring. 5 Steps to get the best out of your Mentee and yourself.**

I hope I have inspired you.

I hope reading this book has made you smile.

I sincerely hope that your smile means you're seeing all kinds of opportunities to be the best mentor you could ever be!

Before I mention all the people (mentors) who have inspired me and all the inspiring books and websites that could be of help for you (and have been of help for me when writing this eBook), I'd like to quote a great mentor program: **Over My Shoulder**. I think the words "great talents" can be replaced by "Mentors and Mentees".

I sincerely hope you will nurture your talent to be the greatest mentor you can be!

"Whether older to younger, or younger to older...once again, it has been proven that mentoring knows no age.

When **great talents** collide, we are reminded that without inspiration, education or support there is no evolving and without emotional sustenance, without a positive influence in our lives, we can become lost, disconnected and unstable.

As individuals and as a society."

Patti Austin

www.overmyshoulderfoundation.org

7 References & Resources

Here is interesting Solution Focused information for businesses, organisations and private interests. The books are suggestions, I mention only one book per author (not potential co-author(s)). The letter behind the book refers to the letter between () in the text where I quoted from a book or a manual.

Chris Iveson & Evan George & Harvey Ratner, BRIEF, UK

www.brief.com

Book: Brief coaching. A Solution Focused Approach (a-c)

Cynthia Franklin, Harry Korman and others

www.sfbta.org

File: SFBT Treatment Manual (b)

Gijs Jansen,

Book: Denk wat je wilt, doe wat je droomt. (d)

Guy Shennan, Solution Focused Practice, UK

www.sfpractice.co.uk

Book: Solution Focused Practice. Effective communication to facilitate change.

Mark McKergow, Solution Focused Work, UK

www.sfwork.com

Book: The Solutions Focus: Making Coaching and Change SIMPLE

Alan Kay, Fry the Monkeys, USA

<http://frymonkeys.com>

Book: Fry The Monkeys Create A Solution: The managers and facilitator's guide to accelerating change using Solution Focus.

Bill O'Hanlon, Possibility Land, USA

www.billohanlon.com

Book: Do One Thing Different: Ten Simple Ways to Change Your Life.

Elliott Connie, The Connie Institute, USA

www.elliottconnie.com

Book: The Solution focused Marriage: 5 Simple habits that will bring out the best in your relationship.

Peter de Jong, trainer at SFBTA, USA

www.sfbta.org

Book: Interviewing for Solutions.

Arnoud Huibers, Solutions Centre, The Netherlands

www.solutions-centre.nl

Biba Rebolj, Solution Focused Coach, Slovenia

<https://si.linkedin.com/pub/a-biba-rebolj/16/49/274>

Ella de Jong, Solution Focused Counselor & Coach, Teaching and Writing about Helpful Communication Skills, The Netherlands

www.elladejong.com

Blogs:

English: www.mentorsmile.blogspot.nl

Dutch: www.elladejong.blogspot.nl

Linkedin:

<https://nl.linkedin.com/pub/ella-de-jong-med/21/31/13/>

Book: Solution Focused Mentoring: 5 Steps to get the best out of your Mentee and yourself.

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