

# Solution focused practice

## An introduction

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# Getting started

- **People think better throughout the meeting if the very first thing they do is to say something true and positive about their work or about how the work of the group is going**

**Nancy Kline, *Time To Think***

# So...

- **What have you been pleased to notice about how you've been working the past week or so?**
- **What else have you been pleased to notice?**

***Keep going round!***

# Appreciation

- **One thing I appreciated hearing about your work recently was...**

# Reflection

- **One thing I found interesting about that exercise was...**

# General overview

- **Ask questions**
- **Listen – *with a constructive ear***
- **Echo, acknowledge, appreciate, summarise**

# A question-based approach

1. **What questions do we ask?**
2. **How do we organise our questions**  
**- *into what type of process?***

10

**1** Hoped for outcome

**2** Description of a 'preferred future' (the hoped for outcome realised)

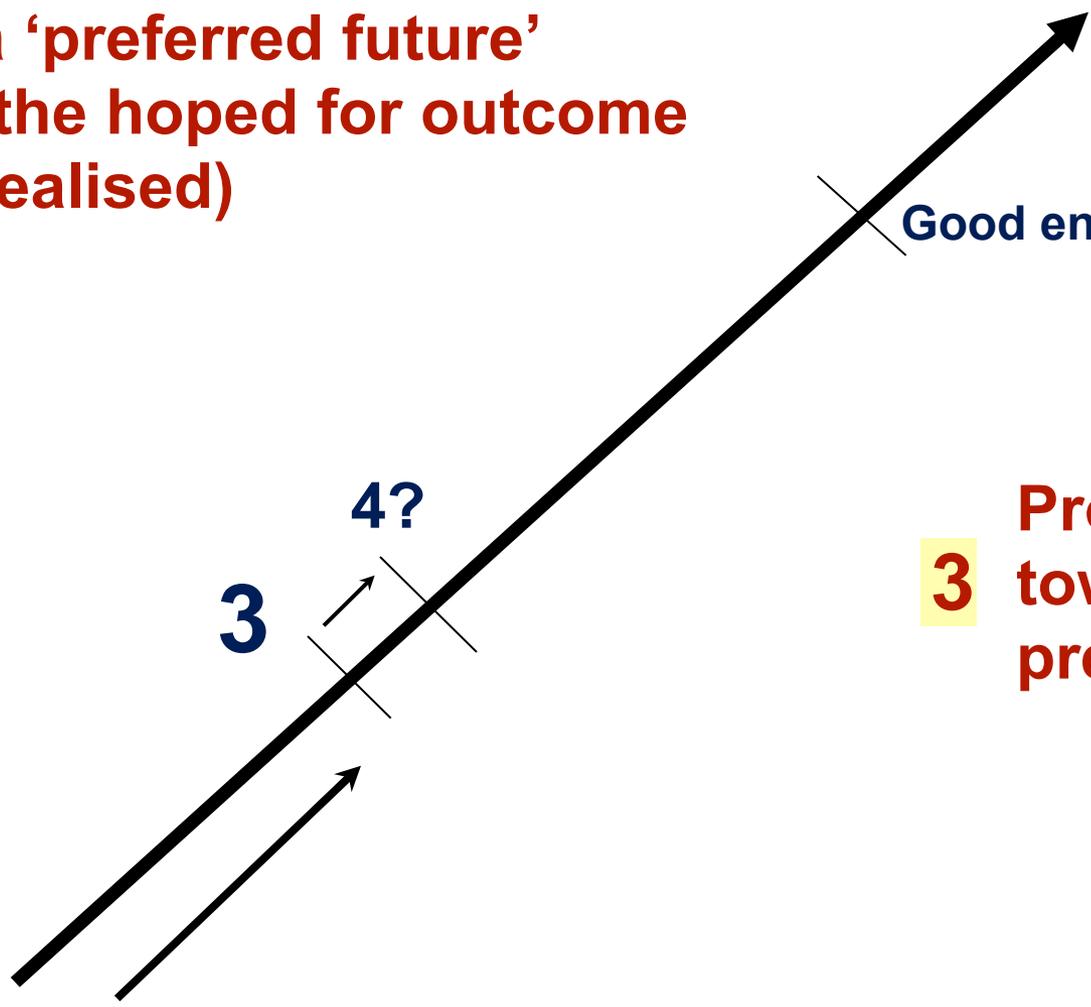
Good enough?

**3** Progress towards this preferred future

4?

3

0



# Listening with a constructive ear

- **Listening for**
  - *Exceptions* to problems
  - Coping abilities
  - Hopes
  - Achievements
  - Progress
  - Strengths, skills, resources

# **1 Setting a direction for the work**

**Towards what is hoped for**

**Establishing a hoped for *outcome***

# Hoped-for *outcome*

- **Something the client would like to be different about herself/himself...  
...as a result of the work to be done**
- **Might involve an improvement in a relationship, or something the person wants to be doing, feeling or thinking differently**
- **Useful to be stated in broad terms (e.g. D - “Moving on”) - the specifics coming later**

# **Creating a forward direction - a variety of questions**

- **What are your best hopes from coming here?**
- **How will you know that this has been useful?**
- **If this is helpful, what will tell you?**
- **What will you notice about yourself, that will tell you that this has been helpful?**
- **What difference are you hoping that this will make, at some point later on?**

# Towards rather than away from something

- **What are your best hopes from our talking?**

- **Example 1**

- **To feel less anxious...**

- *What would you like to be feeling instead?*

- Example 2**

- **To stay off the drugs**

- *What difference would that make?*

- **I'd be able to get on with my life**

# Some common responses

- **Problem talk – what they *don't* want**
- **About process - rather than outcome**
- **“I don't know”**

# Best hopes from the course?

- Take it in turns to ask each other what your 'best hopes' from this course are.
- Ask questions to help your partner to clearly state something they would notice about themselves at some point *after* the course, when they are back at work in all likelihood, that would tell them that it had been useful.

**2**

# **Describing preferred futures**

# *Describing the preferred future*

- **Scene-setting** - time and place
- **Zooming in** - first small signs
- **Positive** - ‘...instead?’
- **Concrete and observable**
  - ‘What would you do if ...?’
  - ‘How would that show?’
  - ‘How would you notice that?’
  - ‘How would you know you... ?’
- **From others’ perspectives** –
  - ‘Who else would notice? What would they notice?’
- **Interactive** – ‘How might they respond?’
- **Widening out** – other differences? What next?

# Future focus practice

- Take it in turns to be 'client', 'worker' & observer
- Client - Let the worker know about some hopes you have for yourself at this time
- Worker - invite the client into their 'preferred future' related to these hopes - '*Suppose, when you wake up on Saturday/Monday...*'
- Then begin to help them DESCRIBE this -
- First small signs? (*...first thing you'd NOTICE about yourself...*)
- *...instead?*
- What will you do Saturday/Monday? (*Find out one thing at a time*)
- What would you notice about yourself while you're doing that, given that you... (that would be a sign of...)?
- *WHAT ELSE...? ++++*
- Who else would notice that...?
- What would they notice? What else?
- How might they respond? How else?

**3**

*Progress*  
towards the preferred future

*Instances*  
of the preferred future already happening/  
or that have happened

# Listening for instances

**Listen for a piece of S's preferred future that is already happening...**

# Hearing instances

**‘Recently I’ve started to sleep well  
(and I want to continue sleeping well)’**

- *What are you curious about?***
- *What questions might you ask S now?***

# LISTS

- **At least 10 things you learned yesterday about the solution-focused approach**
- **At least 5 (more) SF questions**

# 10 skills

- **Help your colleague to name 10 of the top skills they bring to their work**
- **Now ask them to choose one of those skills and *describe* how they used it on one occasion recently.**

*Try questions like -*

- **In using this skill, what did you do? What else...?**
- **How did you do that? How else...?**
- **How else did your use of this skill show?**
- **Who else, do you think, noticed that you had this skill?**
- **How might they have noticed?**
- **How else?**

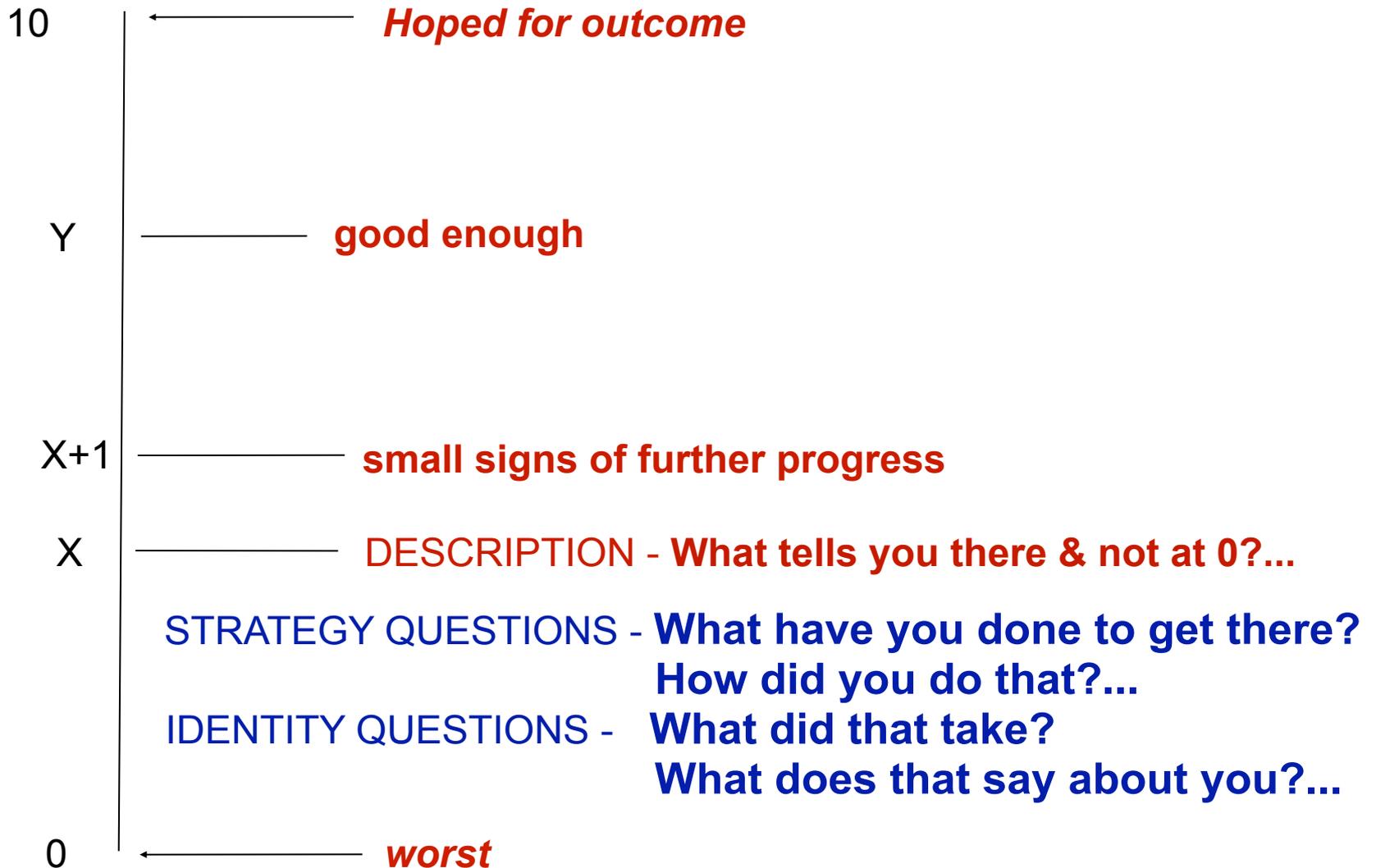
# Interviewing around achievement

- **Bring to mind a recent achievement of yours [an instance of the 'preferred future' you described yesterday afternoon?]**
- **How did you manage to do this?**
- **What else did you do that helped? ++++**
- **What did it take? What qualities did you draw upon? What other qualities? ++++**
- **What differences has it made?**
- **What other differences has it made? ++++**
- **What have others noticed? ++++**
- **What differences might it make in the future? (or - *what differences might it continue to make?*)**

# Eliciting instances

- **Listen - with a constructive ear**
- **Ask - what bits of that have been happening most recently?**
- ***Use scaling questions***

# Scaling questions



# Project yourself

- On a scale from 0 to 10, with 10 representing your project confidently achieved and 0 standing for the moment when you first had the idea, where do you see yourself at present?
- What is it that tells you that you are at that point on the scale and not at 0? What else? What else? ...
- **KEEP GOING** (*What other questions can you ask?*)
- What have you done to get to this point?
- What else? What else? What else?
- What has it taken? (Strengths, skills, resources)
- How would you know that you have moved one point up on your scale? How else? How else?
- What would you be doing differently?
- Who else would notice?
- What would they notice?

# 0 on the scale - problem talk

- **Listen**
- **Acknowledge**  
*“things sound really tough for you at the moment...”*
- **and ask coping questions**  
*“...how are you keeping going?”*

# **‘Coping questions’**

- **Things sound really difficult for you at the moment – how are you keeping going?**
- **That situation sounds pretty overwhelming – how do you get by?**
- **What is it that you do that helps you to get through?**
- **Where do you get the strength from to even get up in the morning?**
- **That sounds really tough – how are you managing to hang on in there?**

# 0 on the scale

## Other responses -

- Listen with a constructive ear e.g. for exceptions to the problems
- Ask about when things were last higher up the scale, what was different then?
- Ask how they would know that things were moving a little bit higher up the scale
- What are you doing to stop it going to minus 1?!

# First meeting

- **Opening**
- **Establishing a direction**
- **Detailed preferred future description  
(and listen for *instances*)**
- **Progress - 0 to 10 scale**
  - **Description**
  - **How?**
  - **One point up?**
- **Closing**

# Closing

- **Brief summary**
- **Next meeting?**
- **Noticing suggestion (optional)**

# Noticing suggestions

- **Can I make a suggestion?**
- **Between now and next time we meet, just notice**
- **... any signs of progress, however small**
- **... any times when you're one point higher up the scale**
- **...**

# Follow –up meetings

- **What's better (since we met)?**
- **Amplify – general to specific**  
**Detail**  
**What difference is that making?**  
**What have others noticed?**
- **How did you do that? What did that take?**
- **What else is better?...**
- **Scale**
- **Closing – summary/feedback**

# Tough situations in follow-up

- **Acknowledgement**
- **Listen with a constructive ear - for exceptions, instances and coping**
- **Coping questions**
- **Persistence – break down the intervening period – better parts?**
- **Highest and lowest points on the scale**
- **How has the client stopped things being (even) worse**
- **Best hopes from *this* meeting**

# End-of-course reflections

- **What have you found most interesting about what you have learned here?**
- **How does what you've learned fit with your preferred ways of working?**
- **Where in your work could you imagine beginning to apply what you have learned?**

