

	<i>Problem-centered Approach</i>	<i>Strength-based Approach</i>
Focus	Problem focused	Problem driven
Professional's role	Assumes an expert role: evaluates client and identifies problem	Assumes client is the expert on their life and situation. Assist client in discovering how strengths and resources can be applied to third-party concerns and mandates while also furthering their wants and concerns.
Assessment	Identify root cause of the problem ("why") and history of the problem	Client describes current stressor as well as their current strengths and past successes to similar problems
Time Orientation	Focus is on the cause of the problem. If a person knows why they do a behavior, they can change that behavior.	Focus is on practical solutions to the current problem.
Goal	Fix what is wrong	Fix what is wrong and nurture what is best. Strengthen connection to client's competencies, past successes, positive interests and wants.
Method	Client receives punishment without needing to take responsibility	Client is held accountable while furthering pro-social interests and skills
Cultural Sensitivity	Cultural sensitivity comes from having knowledge about many cultures and applying that knowledge to families	Cultural sensitivity is generated by a family driven process, where they teach us about their culture. Cultural stereotypes are not relied upon.
Hope and Optimism	Client is instilled with the hope that with our help they can overcome their problem.	Client is instilled with the belief that they have what it takes to get through this.
Court Mandates	Court has non-negotiable mandates. Probation officer determines both the goals and the means for reaching those goals.	Court has non-negotiable mandates. Clients are partners in developing their personal goals. Probation officer helps them focus on what they want to change, maintains the focus, and works to increase positive options.

Group Exercise #2: Strength Based Assessment

The table below has 6 domains that you are trying to assess. For each domain, choose a problem-focused question and as a group, for each question come up with a way to ask for the same information that is strength based. If you have extra time, you can come up with alternative for the rest of the problem-focused questions. See the example below:

<i>Domain to Assess</i>	<i>Problem-Focused Questions</i>	<i>Strength-Based Question</i>
Example	“Why have you been truant twice a week for the last month?”	“How is it that you were able to make it to school on time, all day for three days a week for the last month?”
Family	“Does your family have a history of violence?” OR “Has anyone in your family ever been to jail or prison or been on probation?”	
Peers	“How much alcohol and drugs are your friends doing?” OR “Do you have any friends in a gang?”	
School/Work	“Why are you failing this class?” OR “Why haven’t you been able to get a job yet?”	
Drugs	“Do you think you have a drug problem?” OR “Why do you think you are using drugs so much?”	
Mental Health	“Have you ever been in therapy; why?” OR “Are there any areas of your life that are troubling you, that you worry about, or feel very sad about?”	
Citation	“Didn’t you realize that you would get into this kind of trouble if you did _____?”	