

Helping as Solution Building Rather Than Problem Solving

In contrast to problem-focused questions, in solution-focused approaches, the focus turns more to the clients' perceptions of what is possible, what is working, and what expertise the client brings to the treatment setting about his/her life.

1. We ask them what they would like to see changed in their lives; they customarily answer with a description of their problems. We accept these client definitions of problems and the words (categories) that clients use to describe them.
2. We interview clients about what will be different in their lives when their problems are solved. We listen carefully for, and work hard to respect, the directions in which clients want to go in their lives (their goals) and the words they use to express these directions.
3. We ask clients about their perceptions to the exceptions to their problems. We respect these perceptions as evidence of clients' inner resources (strengths) and as resources that exist in the contexts in which they live.

Key types of solution-building questions:

- ≈ What has the client tried?
- ≈ How has the client survived?
- ≈ What would it take for the client to feel as if he/she were making progress towards his/her goals?
- ≈ What would it look like if the client were moving towards his/her goals?
- ≈ What is a beginning step the client can take towards getting where he/she wants?
- ≈ Are there times when the client has been happier, freer, more successful juggling life's challenges than he/she is now—how did he/she do this?