Activity sheet

# Activity: Solution-focused approach (Adapted from Castle and Buckler, 2021: 253)

A summary of the solution-focused approach is listed below:

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|  Ask the person to define the problem. Ask the person what they would like to happen/what would things look like when the problem is resolved. Ask them to score on a scale of 1‒10 where they are at the moment. Ask them to say why they are already at that level and not lower. Ask what small steps they could take to start moving up the scale.  Ask what signs they would see to indicate initial success/that things have changed for the better.  Ask them how they would like to be different when they’re a 10 on the scale. Ask them to turn these into ‘affirmations’: positive statements that serve as a reminder. |

The areas could be turned into questions such as those listed below:

1. What is my problem?

2. What would I like to happen?

3. How will things appear when this occurs?

4. Where am I at the moment? (1‒10, 1 = worst possible scenario, 10 = fully achieved the goal)

5. Why am I at this level and not any lower?

6. What am I doing already to stop me going any lower?

7. What can I do more of? What small steps can I take?

8. What would be the signs that improvements are happening?

9. Where would I feel sufficiently satisfied? (6, 7 or 8?)

10. How will I be different when I am a 10 on the scale?

11. What affirmation(s) or statement(s) of intent can I make?

## The ‘miracle question’

One of the potential difficulties with the solution-focused approach is in ensuring the person can actually identify what the problem is, or what they want to have changed. One way to help the person is to ask them the ‘miracle question’. This is a question that helps promote their thinking further about how things would look in a different context, as presented below (adapted from Berg and Dolan, 2001:7; De Jong and Berg, 2002:85)

“I am going to ask you a rather strange question [pause]. The strange question is this: [pause].”

“After we finish our conversation, I would like you to picture yourself continuing with your day-to-day activities, going home, having a meal, perhaps watching some television, then going to bed. You drift off into a deep, refreshing sleep. In the middle of the night, a miracle happens which makes your problem disappear. However, because this happened while you were asleep, you have no way of knowing that the miracle occurred and solved the problem.”

“When you wake up in the morning, what small change will you notice which will make you say, ‘Wow, something has happened: my problem has gone’?”

“What else will you notice?”

According to Taylor (2009), the miracle question invites the person to project what life will be like without the problem, whereby the answer to the question becomes the focus to the solution.