

# Western Australian Solution Focused Interest Group (WASFIG) Meeting 16



## **WASFIG Best Hopes: Share, Connect, Grow, Learn, Develop**

1. Share SF knowledge and update our SF knowledge since our original training;
2. Connect and network with like-minded SF practitioners to reduce isolation and enhance a community spirit;
3. Grow interest in the SFBT approach in WA and beyond and do our bit to change the world one SF step at a time;
4. Learn where and with whom SF might be best applied in our practices for greater focus;
5. Develop our clinical effectiveness and efficiency (we may only have a set number of sessions so how do we do the very best with each session as though it may be the only one or the last).

## **WASFIG Zoom Meeting 16 Review: Saturday 24 February 2024 9:30am-11:30am WA Time**

**When: Saturday 24 February 2024 9:30am-11:30am WA Time (QLD = 11:30am-1:30pm; VIC/NSW = 12:30pm-2:30pm; SA/NT = 12pm-2pm; New Zealand = 2:30pm-4:30pm)**

**Where:** Zoom

**Attendees:** Theresa Acutt, Shona Scallan, Nadia Truong, Fiona Skahill, Matt Cameron, Rebekah Collins, Roger Lowe, Steve Runciman and Kerry Drummond (Co-Coordination).

**Apologies:** Yvette Strawbridge, Michele Thomas, Emma Burns, Lauren Daniel, Yasaman Rezvani, Kathy Northrup, Jenny Lawrence and Russell Downham.

**Group Facilitators:** Steve Runciman and Kerry Drummond

**Group Presenter:** All Attendees!

**Topic: Solution Focused Toolbox – BYO Solution Focused Magic**

### **Preparing for our Meeting:**

We invite you to come along and Bring Your Own Solution Focused Magic by reflecting on useful SF tools, videos, articles, books and other learnings to share with the group in working with clients from the SFBT approach. Each attendee can have 5-10 minutes to share thoughts on:

- Any books or articles you have read or videos you watched and what you got out of these;
- Any great SF activities or exercises you have found useful for working with clients;
- An inspirational success story or sparkling moment of some good Solution Focused work you did with your clients and what you did that contributed to the good outcomes;
- Any other thoughts, recent learnings in SF trainings or workshops or questions you have for the group to consider when working with clients from the Solution Focused approach.

We would also like to invite you to reflect on the lessons you have learnt from 2023 about the kind of practitioner you aspire to be, and how you can intentionally implement these learnings to be at your best for 2024. You might find it useful to get creative and find an object to share with the group that best represents the practitioner you aspire to be!

Our first WASFIG meeting for 2024 in February set us up for a successful solution focused year by tapping into our lessons learnt from 2023 to carry into 2024, and building our confidence by reflecting on sparking moments and SF tips and tools. Steve led the discussion by inviting the group to share their lessons learnt and we were inspired by many insights and wisdom that followed, and were moved by the transformations some attendees shared that were experienced by their clients. We have noted some of the wonderful thoughts that were shared below.

***Lessons Learnt and Shared from 2023 to Carry with us into 2024:***

- Stubbornly believe in our client, particularly in the face of multiple setbacks, and they are more likely to receive the message that the practitioner believed in them when others did not and knew they could be a better person.
- A client was experiencing grief and trauma from a recent loss of her partner. Asking the Best Hopes question enabled the client to refocus on how to remember her partner in way that was right for herself which created a visible transformation of the client in her face in session, and the client reflected that she still has a purpose in life, that she had found hope inside herself.
- Listen closely to our client's language to identify their strengths and listen for what is important to them in their life and use this as a context for SF questions. A client was feeling depressed and stuck in life as did not believe she was capable of achieving her dream. She was asked to 'deliberately daydream' to imagine her Best Hopes come to reality and to watch herself in 'mental movies' as she was interested in drama/movies. This client returned to the next session with a 'shockingly good outcome', she had transformed herself and had enrolled in university to work towards her dream career.
- Praising a person directly denies the client the opportunity of noticing their own achievements, instead SF practitioners look to ask self-complimenting questions for clients to compliment themselves which is a more powerful process coming from internally within the client rather than an external other.
- Get to know the person, not the problem that brought the client to session, which enables the SF practitioner to show up as a different kind of person with a different perspective in the client's life.
- Create a list of client strengths while listening to them in session, and at the end of the session ask permission to reflect these strengths back to the client. This is helpful both for the practitioner and the client to not lose sight of the client's strengths amidst problem talk.
- Invite parents to reflect on what they are impressed by in their children to rebuild connection between parents and children during challenging periods. Invite parents to pretend their miracle day has already happened to experiment with what they and others notice which causes the parent to leave the session with hope.
- *See the possibility, not the problem.* Have courage to persist to work to identify a meaningful Best Hopes from the client. Listen out for opportunities to ask questions that highlight more of what they want happening, listen for capacity and amplify this with 'how did you do that' questions and 'what difference did that make' questions.

### **Sharing our Solution Focused Toolbox:**

Kerry shared the tipsheet she created *Pathways to Possibility: 8 Solution Focused Tips to Build Practitioner Confidence, Make a Difference in Your Client's Life and Unstick Yourself from the Problem*. Reading over these before a session is a good way to ground myself in the SF mindset of a Resilientologist to brace myself for the problem talk wave so I am less likely to be swept away. I hope to read over these tips to remind myself to hold onto a SF mindset when going into session to use as 'a solution focused anchor in the problem storm'.

Kerry then invited the group to share their SF tools and tips which we present below:

- Elliott Connie's 1 page of 101 Solution Focused Questions.
- Asking clients what they have found helpful from session results in amazing ideas the practitioner would never have thought of but are useful for the client to take away. It is helpful to learn from multiple SF experts to gain clarity and a better understanding of working from the SFBT approach.
- Believing in our professional colleagues' capacity for change, as we believe in our client's capacity for change.
- Invite parents to begin a session by talking about their child's strengths, write down three things they have noticed their child do that pleases them, invite the child to plan three things they would like to do as surprises for their parents and even to flip a coin to decide which day to do it to make homework fun!
- Remind myself an affirmation at the beginning of the session after reading through the referral "I see the client" to remember to see and get to know the client not the problem.
- Building confidence in being a SF practitioner from first starting out and questioning whether or not I was being helpful to now knowing that I am, trusting the process, following the client's pace, noticing client progress, positive feedback and outcomes.
- Anchor myself before session by reminding myself 'I know I can help my client by asking these questions'.

Steve shared a reminder with the group from the co-founder of SFBT Steve de Shazer that solution talk leads to more solution talk – what we focus on grows. Steve also shared the HAPN framework to guide a solution focused session: identify Best Hopes, describe the Alternate Preferred Future, scale Progress and identify Next steps and future progress.

Theresa Acutt kindly shared with the group these useful links for Alesya Courtage: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RdSvOqKGYNw> and Thriving Relationships and Solution Focused conversations: <https://openmindededucation.com/episode115/>

There were so many inspiring lessons and tips shared by attendees. These are just a few of them. Please add in your own top three SF lessons and tips below that may have been sparked in you through reading this summary of attendees thoughts. Consider keeping this with you, if you might find that useful, to read over and ground yourself in the SF mindset before session with your client and draw upon to fuel your solution focused anchor amidst a problem storm!

**SF Lesson/Tip 1:**

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**SF Lesson/Tip 2:**

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### **SF Lesson/Tip 3:**

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#### ***Pathways to Possibility: The importance of Having Language for What you Want, Not Just For the Problem***

In preparation for our WASFIG February 2024 meeting this week, Kerry had been reflecting on lessons learnt in her SF journey. I recently discussed a personal challenge with a good confidant. After the discussion, I was reminded of a very important lesson in SFBT that I wanted to share with you – Elliott Connie style! This is the importance of **working with our client to build more detailed language for what they want**, what this looks like, not just having language for the problem. I was feeling very stuck as I was focused on ‘the problem’ and the more I went over the problem language in my mind I built on, and was consumed by, all the negative emotions that accompany this. It felt almost like this was ‘paralysing’ my capacity to see a way forward. In speaking with my confidant, she helped me build language for what I wanted to happen instead, what this might look like. As I envisioned my ‘best hopes’ and had more words and language for what this could be, I had hope that there was actually a way forward after all. This hope seemed to somehow shift the heaviness and I felt lighter, and my mind was clearer to focus on creating a way forward. This empowering experience of shifting to possibility is the same that I hope to gift my clients with when they feel ‘paralysed’ by a problem. Just the simple act of having a conversation about what the client wants to have happen instead of the problem enables us to articulate with language what we want, which is somehow powerful enough to breathe hope and lightness into us to clear the overwhelming emotions so we can better focus, get on with what we need to do and take the next step in the direction of our best hopes. Building language for our clients (and ourselves!) for what we want to have happen is our way back into hope through describing a way forward, a pathway to possibility. Which ‘SF lesson’ have you learnt in your life that inspired your client work that you might like to share?

#### ***Elliott Connie: SFBT: How To Help Your Client to Overcome Anything - 24 February 2024***

Elliott kindly presented a free training this week in which he shared some powerful keys to the SFBT approach:

- Build towards what the client wants using their resources.
- The focus is on the details of change, not the problem.
- It’s not a cookie-cutter approach, instead it’s tailored to each client’s language in each session.
- You must be able to focus on what the client’s heart desires.
- It’s not about the problem, but don’t ignore it.
- Let the question do the work, don’t ‘rescue’ the client.
- Be sure to connect each and every one of your questions to the client’s desired outcome.
- Master the skill of asking questions that produce meaningful answers.

#### ***Information for our Upcoming WASFIG Zoom Meeting 17 in April 2024***

##### ***WASFIG Zoom Meeting 17: Saturday 27 April 2024 9:30am-11:30am WA Time***

***When: Saturday 27 April 2024 9:30am-11:30am WA Time (QLD = 11:30am-1:30pm; VIC/NSW = 11:30pm-1:30pm; SA/NT = 11am-1pm; New Zealand = 1:30pm-3:30pm)***

##### ***Topic: Solution Focused Self Care***

For our WASFIG April 2024 meeting we will explore the important topic of how to best care for ourselves as practitioners. Evan George of BRIEF London has shared how working from the SFBT approach actually builds

resilience for practitioners who are focused on eliciting capacity and having more hopeful conversations - good to experience for our clients as well as ourselves as practitioners. Engaging in SF conversations with our clients can have a protective quality for the practitioner, and research (Perez Lamadrid & Froerer, 2022; Medina & Beyehbach, 2014) has found SF conversations are more likely to lead to Vicarious Resilience to help balance out experiences of Vicarious Trauma. Jacqui von Cziffra-Bergs from the Solution Focused Institute of South Africa has spoken of how being a Resilientologist can invite inspiring conversations with clients that maintain our energy and motivation to keep supporting our clients through challenging experiences. She has also shared some useful SF self care tips for practitioners to protect against burnt out that we will share with the group.

### ***In preparing for our April 2024 WASFIG meeting:***

We would like to invite you to notice, from now until the April 2024 WASFIG meeting, times that your resilience and energy as a practitioner is strongest, times when you are enjoying a 'proud practitioner moment' or a 'shockingly good outcome' with a client, and to consider what you did to contribute to these times happening. We look forward to learning about how you maintain your self care to continue to show up at your best for your clients.

### ***WASFIG News:***

***March 2024 - SFBT: Skills Practice and Supervision Groups via Zoom starting in March 2024*** — 2 hour bi monthly groups meeting with 4 or 5 practitioners to get support on client cases and practice SF skills together. First groups to be held in March on ***Friday 8 March 2024 at 9:30am-11:30am WA time*** and ***Saturday 23 March 2024 9:30am-11:30am***. Contact Kerry if you are interested in more information which I have posted on the WASFIG Facebook page. 10% discount for the first group for WASFIG members who have attended a meeting and for ASFA members.

***May 2024 - SF24 Conference Friday 3 May 2024 9am-3pm Sydney time – 7am-1pm WA time:*** Matt Cameron kindly shared a link for the upcoming SF24 Conference held online for those who are interested to join:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/sf2424-building-hope-empowering-change-tickets-793510139187?aff=oddtcreator>

***September 2024 - ASFA Conference 2024 held in Sydney on 12-15 September 2024*** - with Mark McKergow as key note speaker. For more information see the ASFA website below.

Join the ***Australasian Solution Focused Association*** to access free workshops with special guest presenters during the year (which is recorded to access at a later time if you cannot attend), articles from the Journal of Solution Focused Practices, monthly online peer group supervision on Monday afternoons, and the members only Facebook group. <https://www.solutionfocused.org.au/>

Please join our ***WASFIG Facebook Group*** to keep connecting and building our network between meetings, see up to date news and information for our group, share great SFBT resources and get support in working with clients. If you have any more thoughts to add on this February 2024 Summary it would be great to start a discussion in the Facebook group so we can all join in: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/3103428583276551>

Thank you all for attending our February 2024 WASFIG meeting and inspiring the group with useful SF tools and tips and sparking client moments! Please look out for more information on our upcoming April 2024 WASFIG group via email and on our Facebook page, and let Steve and Kerry know if you would like to join us for our April 2024 WASFIG meeting and we will email you the Zoom link and resources.

Warmly,

Kerry and Steve

WA SFBT Interest Group Co-Coordinator