

Western Australian Solution Focused Interest Group (WASFIG) Meeting 23



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 23 Review: Saturday 28 June 2025 9:30am-11:30am WA Time

When: Saturday 28 June 2025 9:30am-11:30am WA Time (QLD VIC/NSW = 11:30pm-1:30pm; SA/NT = 11am-1pm; New Zealand = 1:30pm-3:30pm)

Where: Zoom

Attendees: Theresa Acutt, Michele Thomas, Nadia Truong, Samantha Smith, Tracy Shirvill, Ruth Leveson, Fiona Skahill, Roger Lowe, Heather Bunting, Rebecca Collins, Joanna JM Kwan, Wendy Garreffa, Jo Lockhart, Steve Runciman and Kerry Drummond (Co-Coordinators).

Apologies: Shona Scallan, Simon Dowling, John Teager, and Sara Ristovska.

Group Facilitators: Steve Runciman and Kerry Drummond

Topic: *Embracing a SFBT Approach to Neurodiversity: Discovering Unique Strengths and Possibilities Amidst Needs and Challenges to Empower Neurodivergent Clients*

At our WASFIG gathering in June 2025, we had the privilege of drawing from the deep well of professional and personal insights shared by attendees about their experiences working with neurodivergent clients. Once again, the conversation left us wishing for more time — more time to hear the diverse perspectives and thoughtful guidance of the experienced practitioners who generously joined us.

Steve opened the gathering by inviting everyone to introduce themselves, then led us into two minutes of creative silence to reflect on the question: *“What brings you into harmony with yourself, and how does this affect your relationship with others?”* The responses that followed were both inspiring and deeply resonant, offering a collective pool of wisdom we could all dip into for our own self-integration.

Attendees spoke of practices such as spending time in nature, listening to music, humming, prayer, meditation, meaningful connection with energising others, movement, learning, time with animals, conscious breathing, dancing, painting, and early morning exercise in the stillness of the day. These shared reflections offered a rich array of resources to support personal alignment and deeper interpersonal connection.

SFBT as a Neuro-Affirming Practice: Unlocking Strengths Amidst Challenges to Promote Hope and Possibility

Kerry followed with a thought-provoking presentation on how adopting the Solution Focused (SF) mindset - the core belief that every client possesses the inner resources to create meaningful change - can shape the way we engage in conversations that uncover each person's unique and effective coping strategies. By recognising clients as the true experts in their own lives, SFBT offers an affirming, respectful, and empowering framework for growth.

Kerry explored how SFBT can support neurodivergent clients in several meaningful ways:

- **Discovering and becoming their best selves** in both personal and professional domains. Using the Connie-Froerer SFBT Diamond Approach (2021), clients are invited to articulate and define the transformation they desire. The SFBT Diamond helps clarify: their best version of self (Desired Outcome/Transformation/Identity), moments when they've already shown up as this version of themselves (History of the Outcome), their qualities and resources that support this identity (Resources for the Outcome), and signs that this transformation is growing stronger in future (Future of the Outcome). Sessions close in a way that honours the client's autonomy to go on and live life as their Desired Identity, perhaps inviting them to notice times this version of themselves is already present in their life.
- **Strengthening self-perception and building hope** through positive, presuppositional, self-complimenting questions that highlight a client's contributions to their own progress. These questions not only help clients feel good about themselves but also foster awareness that they are already making positive changes, often without realising it. By bringing these actions into awareness, clients become more intentional and likely to notice and build on them in the future. This process nurtures both self-awareness and confidence in their ability to face challenges.
- **Creating personalised self-care strategies** by exploring times when the client feels most energised and aligned. Kerry encouraged a deep dive into what clients are doing during these moments when they are at their best, who notices it, and how it affects their interactions with others. From here, clients can identify signs of their desired version of self showing up to manage better across different life areas - at work, at home, in relationships, or in school. Clients can be invited to consider which self-care strategies are most effective for them and how these might be adjusted or expanded to offer even greater support in daily life.

Through this exploration, Kerry illustrated how SFBT offers a deeply respectful and tailored way to support neurodivergent individuals in harnessing their strengths and designing lives that align with their values and goals.

Changing the Brain: Moving Beyond Medication – David Nowell

Kerry then shared insights from a neurodiversity affirming training she completed with Dr. David Nowell, a Clinical Neuropsychologist based in the U.S. In this workshop, David offered practical ways to support clients, particularly those with ADHD, in designing a lifestyle that works with, rather than against, their unique brain. He emphasised recognising both the strengths and challenges of neurodivergence and encouraged practitioners to help clients live well by aligning their lives with how their brains function best.

One of the key concepts David introduced was *Strategic Behavioural Inquiry* (SBI), an approach specifically tailored for working with neurodivergent clients. Kerry highlighted how SBI aligns closely with the Solution Focused mindset, particularly in its foundational belief that clients are already doing the best they can and that meaningful change starts by recognising what's already working.

SBI invites practitioners to explore clients' existing successful strategies, no matter how small, and ask powerful, targeted questions such as "*How exactly did you do that?*" This question not only affirms the client's ability but also

encourages a deeper awareness of the strategies they're already using effectively. In doing so, clients can begin to apply these strategies more intentionally moving forward.

Kerry noted that asking client's 'how did you do that' is a core concept in Solution Focused work and referenced *Solution-Focused Practice: How Do You Do That?*, a recently published book by Michael Durrant of the Brief Therapy Institute of Sydney. The book offers a thorough grounding in SFBT and includes a compelling transcript of Michael working with a client navigating trauma, illustrating the practical power of this approach.

David Nowell also discussed the idea of guiding clients to act in service of their "future self" by asking questions like "*When is your energy at its best?*" or "*What tends to lead to the best outcomes?*" These SBI-style questions are designed to build a client's self-awareness around how to live well intentionally with their brain. Kerry concluded her presentation by highlighting a particularly intriguing point David made: that certain SBI questions can actually boost dopamine in the brain.

For example, asking a client "*How will you know you're enjoying the sunset?*" prompts them to mentally envision the scene in vivid detail. In describing this, they begin to experience those pleasant emotions in the moment - essentially bringing the joy of the future into the present. As SBI questions seem remarkably similar to SF questions, it could follow then that asking our client preferred future questions from the SFBT approach could increase dopamine in the brain and literally 'make our clients feel good' as Elliott Connie has previously shared! Clients often smile, report feeling uplifted, or show a visible "glow" when describing their preferred future in SFBT sessions.

This beautifully reflects Steve de Shazer's belief - shared with his wife and SFBT co-creator Insoo Kim Berg - that "*language creates reality, rather than describes it.*" Through rich, detailed narratives of their desired future, clients are invited into a mental rehearsal and not only envision change but begin to emotionally experience it, making that imagined future feel real, meaningful, and within reach.

A lively group discussion ensued during Kerry's presentation and we then ended with a group reflection on the following and other questions that arose during the discussion:

- What is important to remember when working with neurodivergent clients?
- How do you work well with neurodivergent clients from a neuro-affirming approach which is also in line with SFBT?
- How can SF questions be adapted to suit neurodivergent clients who may struggle with articulating their thoughts, memory of past events or capacity to create future descriptions?

Kerry's question she was left with after David's training that she shared with the group was:

Can having a SF conversation and talking in terms of affirmation instead of limitation increase dopamine levels to improve engagement, motivation, therapeutic alliance/emotional safety and usefulness of session for our client?

Key Reflections on Changing the Brain in a SF Way:

Invite our neurodivergent client to transform into their best version of self living well with their brain and notice opportunities to continue to do this more intentionally in future.

Invite clients to 'live well' with whichever brain they have. From the Solution Focused perspective, rather than identifying strategies to implement to make their life easier 'problem solving', we are instead inviting our clients to explore a 'whole of life' transformation – this is 'solution building'. Invite clients into a description of the version of themselves who lives well with their neurodivergent brain by considering how they have learnt to do this in the past,

what resources or skills they draw on to achieve this, and signs of them continuing to live well with their brain in future.

- Focus on the person as the expert of their brain.
- When the client reports something has gone right, explore with them how they did that – ‘How Exactly Did You Do That?’
- Exactly – the importance of detail to be able to visualise and know exactly what to do – this is what Mark McKergow has referred to as mind or world stretching.
- Identify a client’s best version of self living well with their brain difference, how this version engages in life in the most useful way, being mindful of energy, attention and what is possible on which day by incorporating adjustments and accommodations for different levels of energy available.
- Highlighting choice intentionality, reclaim control of what you are doing, do not be controlled by dopamine or technology – amplify when and how clients made a choice that benefitted their future self.
- Asking a client what gives them energy and what drains this – what is fun and important for a client and what is not.
- Importance of the pull of the hoped for future – client identifying a meaningful Desired Outcome (asking instead, difference and noticing questions) and benefits of achieving their Desired Outcome through Preferred Future description.

Be Mindful to Move at Your Client’s Pace:

“If you want to go fast . . . go slow”. – Insoo Kim Berg

Neurodivergent clients may sometimes feel overwhelmed by questions or emotional intensity during sessions, and in those moments, they might struggle to respond. Repeating the same question without adapting it can unintentionally create pressure, potentially damaging the trust and connection you've worked to build. This highlights the importance of developing fluency in Solution Focused language, learning to speak *with* your client by truly listening *to* them.

Elliott Connie and Adam Froerer emphasise the value of asking meaningful, specific, and answerable questions that reflect your client's own words and experiences. Rather than broad, abstract prompts like, “What does confidence look like?”, a more effective and accessible question might be, “What might be the very first sign you're feeling more confident when speaking with your partner that morning?” These kinds of hopeful questions not only help the client reflect more clearly but can also cause a client to compliment themselves and feel good in the moment.

“Learn to ask questions that allow your clients to experience themselves positively through their own answers.”

- Adam Froerer

Believing in your client’s capability remains central to the SF approach. However, belief must be paired with compassion for where your client is *right now*. While all clients are seen as the experts in their own lives, some may need more time, space, and sessions to access their own insights. As Evan George from BRIEF London has noted, regularly checking in with our client by asking, “Are we talking about the right things?”, can help keep the work grounded in what is most useful and relevant for them.

If a client appears overwhelmed, either through nonverbal cues or by expressing that they feel stuck or blank, we look to respond with authenticity and care. Evan encourages practitioners to acknowledge this honestly, perhaps saying something like, “I’m sorry for getting carried away and moving too fast,” and then gently reconnecting.

Returning to the client's *Best Hopes* or asking what would be most useful at that point in the session can help re-establish a collaborative tone.

Cecil Walker from the Solution Focused Universe (SFU) has spoken about the power of "languaging toward the outcome" - asking follow-up questions that help clients clarify what they want in a way that becomes more vivid and concrete. This process often takes time and requires gentle persistence. Similarly, John Sharry reminds us to pace ourselves alongside our clients, not ahead of them. Through careful listening, we can learn how to adjust our questions to match the way each client processes information - whether through thoughts, feelings, or sensations. In true SF-style, we learn how to speak in a useful way with our client from our client themselves. If we notice our questions are not resonating for our client, we ask the question in a different way as we work respectfully with gentle persistence to co-construct a useful conversation that aligns with where our client is at.

As Adam Froerer (SFU) notes, SFBT looks to ask questions that help clients experience themselves in a positive light. If, as David Nowell suggests, this moment of feeling good can even produce a dopamine boost, asking Solution Focused questions may help to ease anxiety and promote a sense of calm and clearer thinking in the moment.

Ultimately, we look to stay connected and attuned to our client in the moment and if we notice we have gone too fast we apologise and look to reconnect again in a respectful and genuine way, and hope our client will give us another chance!

Thank you Nadia, Jo and Tracy!!

We warmly thank Nadia Truong and Jo Lockhart for generously sharing their expertise and experience at WASFIG in June 2025, offering valuable insights into working respectfully and supportively with neurodivergent clients. Nadia shared her creative integration of the Solution Focused Brief Therapy approach in her work with children and their families, while Jo brought a rich perspective from her neurodiversity-affirming practice, highlighting important considerations for practitioners seeking to build meaningful connections with neurodivergent clients. We would also like to extend our sincere appreciation to Tracy Shirvill for contributing her insights and experiences in this important area of practice.

Jo has kindly offered to connect with anyone who would like to learn more about supporting neurodivergent clients in a respectful and empowering way. Please contact Jo on jo@jolockhart.com.au

This is an important and evolving area of practice, and there is much we can learn from one another about how to best support neurodivergent clients. During Kerry's presentation, the depth and richness of the discussion meant we weren't able to engage in the deeper reflective conversation we had hoped for around the proposed questions and emerging insights.

With that in mind, we'll be revisiting *Embracing a SFBT Approach to Neurodiversity 2.0* in future for us to continue our conversation and for others to join in - watch this space!

Resources:

Thank you Nadia for sharing a great resource – *Take what you need Tokens* by Dr Karen Treisman which is attached with the summary.

Another thank you to Theresa for sharing a few resources she had brought for the group:

Dr Amy Marschall YouTube [videos](#) on working with Neurodivergent clients.

Dr Megan Neff has [videos](#) and podcasts.

[NeuroWild](#) - a Neurodivergent Facebook group for working with children.

Durrant, M. (2024), *Solution Focused Practice: How Do You Do That?*, Kurrajong Press: Sydney

Hamdani, S. (2023), *Self Care for People with ADHD: 100+ Ways to Recharge, De-Stress and Prioritize You!*, Adams Media: USA

Hallowell, E. M. and Ratey, J.J. (2021), *ADHD 2.0*, Ballantine Books: New York

Kellett, S., & Bell, G. (2025). Solution Focused Practice and Autism Within the Primary Classroom: A Retrospective Case Study. *Journal of Solution Focused Practices*, 9(1), 3–19. <https://doi.org/10.59874/001c.129824>

Nowell, D, (2022), *Changing the Brain: Moving Beyond Medication*, Online Workshop completed June 2025 through PESI. Here is a [video](#) with David Nowell sharing some thoughts.

David's 6 hour training offered by [PESI](#).

Information for our Upcoming WASFIG Zoom Gathering 24 in August 2025

When: Saturday 23 August 2025 9:30am-11:30am WA Time (QLD VIC/NSW = 11:30pm-1:30pm; SA/NT = 11am-1pm; New Zealand = 1:30pm-3:30pm)

Topic: Special Guest Speaker Andrew Gibson

We are delighted to welcome Andrew Gibson as the Special Guest Speaker for our upcoming WASFIG gathering in August 2025. This will be at the special time of Saturday 23 August 2025 930am-11:30am WA time rather than our usual fourth Saturday of the month.

Andrew is a highly respected expert in the application of Solution Focused practice within organisations across the UK, and is currently working on transforming productivity within the UK's National Health Service! With extensive experience in business and team coaching, training, and supervision, Andrew brings a wealth of insight into how Solution Focused approaches can create meaningful and sustainable change in organisational settings. Attendees to our August WASFIG group are in for a treat as the first group to hear more about Andrew's new book *Essence of Solution Focused Practice*, hot off the press for 2025! Andrew will share how the SF mindset can be taught to anyone who would like to make a positive difference to the way they work, by implementing this mindset with the tools they already use to increase productivity, identify resources and guide teams to work towards a mutual goal.

In preparing for our August 2025 WASFIG meeting:

Here is Andrew's [website](#) for more information on his work.:

Dion Sing and Jason Pascoe recently interviewed Andrew Gibson on their [Towards Solutions Podcast](#)! Have a listen to get a good warm up for our WASFIG gathering and prepare any questions you might like to ask Andrew on the day.

Reflection Questions to warm up for our discussion:

Andrew will be sharing his understanding of the SF mindset and how he has used this to train others to better understand and implement SF practice in their work. In preparation for our reflective discussion of Andrew's book and thoughts, we would be interested to know:

- What is your understanding of the SF mindset?
- How exactly do you approach your particular client base with this SF mindset in mind?
- What is one thing you are reminding yourself of or doing differently in the way you are: a. preparing for your client session; b. engaging with your client during the session; and/or c. writing up your case notes and reflecting on the session that fits with your SF mindset, that you might not have done before discovering the SFBT approach?
- What difference have you noticed it has made to your clients (how they engage with you, the changes they have made in their lives, or in the feedback they have provided you) since you have adopted a SF mindset and used more of a SF approach with them?
- What difference has it made to yourself as a practitioner (in your work and in your personal life) since you have been working in a more SF way?

We are honoured that Andrew will be sharing his latest book and knowledge with us, and welcome you to join us in learning from his engaging and accessible approach to complex problems and sharing in rich conversations together.

WASFIG News:

Look out for these Upcoming SF Events

- **July 2025 Creative Silence Australasia with Steve Runciman and Tracy Shirvill via Zoom** – First Wednesday Morning of the Month! – Next meeting is Wednesday 6 August 2025 11:30am-1:30pm (AWST). Please see more information and [Zoom link](#) at the end of the WASFIG June Summary and contact Steve on srunciman@iinet.net.au or Tracy on hello@findingfelicitycounselling.com.au
- **July 2025 SFBT Skills Practice and Supervision Groups with Kerry via Zoom – Saturday 26 July 2024 9:30am-11:30am WA Time (11:30am-1:30pm AEST)** for \$80 for the 2 hours if anyone would like to join to get some support and inspiration on client cases and to practice SF skills in a supportive environment. The July 2025 group is full but please contact Kerry if you are interested to join a group and if there are enough practitioners we can create a second July group.
- **Australasian Solution Focused Association (ASFA)** - To connect with SF practitioners across Australasia, please join [ASFA](#) (\$110 annual fee) and have access to monthly members meetings held on the third Wednesday of the month, monthly online peer group supervision on the first Monday of the month, discounts for SF training and the ASFA Conference, and access to the private Facebook group.
- **ASFA Members Meetings** – Next meeting will be this coming **Wednesday 16 July 2025 at 3pm WA time/5pm AEST**. Topic will explore how we can promote the SF way of working in the broader community. Join ASFA for free members meetings and group supervision and discounts to training and the conference.
- **ASFA Conference November 2025 in Dunedin, New Zealand – 14-16 November 2025 and speakers** Brent Gardiner (Counsellor, Supervisor and Educator) and Sharon Shea (Working in Maori Health and Systems Transformation and Indigenous Wellbeing) and John Henden SF expert in suicide prevention.
- **More Than Just a Book Club** meetings (Wednesdays) and **SF in Organisations (SFiO) Downunder - SF Conversations** (Mondays) to find out more please contact **John Teager** john.teager@outlook.com.

Tap into inspiring conversations between WASFIG meetings by joining our [WASFIG Facebook Group](#)! Keep connecting and building our network between meetings, see up to date news and information for our group, share great SFBT resources and link in with Solution Focused peer support while working with your clients.

Thank you all again for attending our June 2025 WASFIG meeting with the reminder that by recognising their own abilities, clients can develop a stronger self-perception, boost their self-esteem, and build the self-trust that can cultivate hope and momentum for ongoing positive change. We look forward to seeing all who can attend our August 2025 WASFIG meeting with our special guest speaker Andrew Gibson to learn more about his approach to sharing the SF mindset to transform teams and organisations.

Warmly,

Kerry and Steve

WA SFBT Interest Group Co-Coordinators

June 2025

“Help clients figure out what sets them on fire, then encourage them to get up every morning and commit to setting themselves on fire”

- David Nowell

Join Steve Runciman and Tracy Shirvill for their new WASFIG initiative for 2025 *Creative Silence Australasia*!

Next Meeting: Wednesday 6 August | 11:30 AM – 1:30 PM (AWST)

Then ongoing: First Wednesdays of the month till September 2025

Upcoming dates:

August 6 | September 3

A quiet space for creative focus, shared presence, and Solution Focused inspiration.

In silence, we make room for what is not yet spoken, for what is waiting to be born.

Join us for *Creative Silence Australasia*—a monthly Zoom session where we come together in silence to work on whatever inspires us through a Solution Focused lens. Whether you're writing, planning, reflecting, creating, or dreaming, this space offers a gentle nudge and the comfort of shared intention.

The format is simple:

11:30AM – 11:45 AM – Arrive, say hello, and share your focus for the next 90 minutes

11:45 AM – 1.15 PM – Silent work time (cameras on, mics off)

1.15PM – 1:30 PM – Music and reflections on what the time brought you

No fee. No registration. Just come.

This space is an **Australasian expression** of the inspiring *Creative Silence* sessions created by **Anton Stellamans and Jonas Wells** in Europe. With gratitude, we draw on their creativity and generosity to host this peaceful, productive pause each month.

Zoom link: Wed 6 August, 2025 11:30 AM Perth AWST

Enquiries:

Tracy Shirvill – hello@findingfelicitycounselling.com.au

Steve Runciman – srunciman@iinet.net.au

Come as you are—and enjoy the quiet company of others doing the same.