

COACHING IN SCHOOLS

Pocketbook



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Feel the difference



Work with a colleague and take turns to ask each other the following sets of questions:

- What is the problem?
- How long have you had it?
- Where does the fault lie?
- Who's most to blame?
- What's your worst experience of it?
- Why haven't you solved it?

- What do you want instead of the problem?
- How will you know when you've got this?
- What else will improve as a result?
- What resources do you already have to help?
- What is something similar you've achieved?
- What's the next step?

What were the differences for you between these sets of questions?
How did they feel different? What were the differences in responses they generated?

This is a really powerful illustration of how language links to emotion and thought processes.

Solutions vs. problems



The questions on the previous page illustrate the difference between problem-centred (left) and solution-focused (right) thinking. Although there are many models of coaching, all **effective** coaching is solution focused.

The left-hand set of questions generates short, often one-word answers and feels uncomfortable. In contrast, the right-hand set opens up dialogues, creates possibilities, and very often leads to a way forward.

Exploring problems in great depth tends to leave people and organisations feeling frustrated. They simply end up knowing more about what doesn't work. It also generates a lot of negative energy and emotions which often lead to blame and impaired collaboration. Worse still, since the dialogues that occur are the foundation of a school's culture, problem-focused approaches inhibit high performance and are demotivating and disempowering.

Digging away at a problem simply makes the hole deeper!



Problem-focused thinking cycles



Problem-focused Cycles



With thanks to Ben Furman and Evan George for the initial idea.

A more effective way



An SF approach acknowledges the reality of issues and difficulties and then presents a fundamental shift of both emphasis and focus. It asks questions like:

'When things are more how you'd like them to be, what will you be doing differently?'

'When you are managing this class in the best way you can imagine, what will you be doing that helps this?'

'What would you notice that told you this team was becoming more collaborative?'

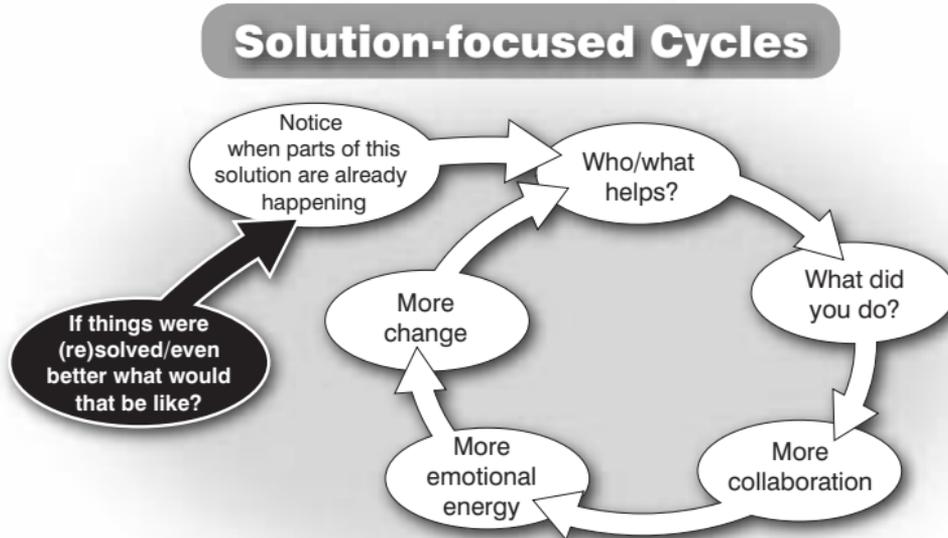
'What would be one thing that you could do to help this happen?'

In asking these and similar questions, you orientate people's thinking towards:

- A solution – often referred to as a **preferred future**
- Describing successful actions and attitudes
- Building positive expectations – optimism and hope
- Opening up possibilities for change
- Focusing on strengths and resources to support change

Remember: change NEVER occurs in the past.

Solution-focused thinking cycles



With thanks to Ben Furman and Evan George for the initial idea.

Coaching for solutions



Solution-focused coaching seeks to empower people to find their own solutions through exploring and then amplifying their own strengths and skills. It looks for examples of success, however slight, and encourages you to do more of what works.

It is based on eight key principles:

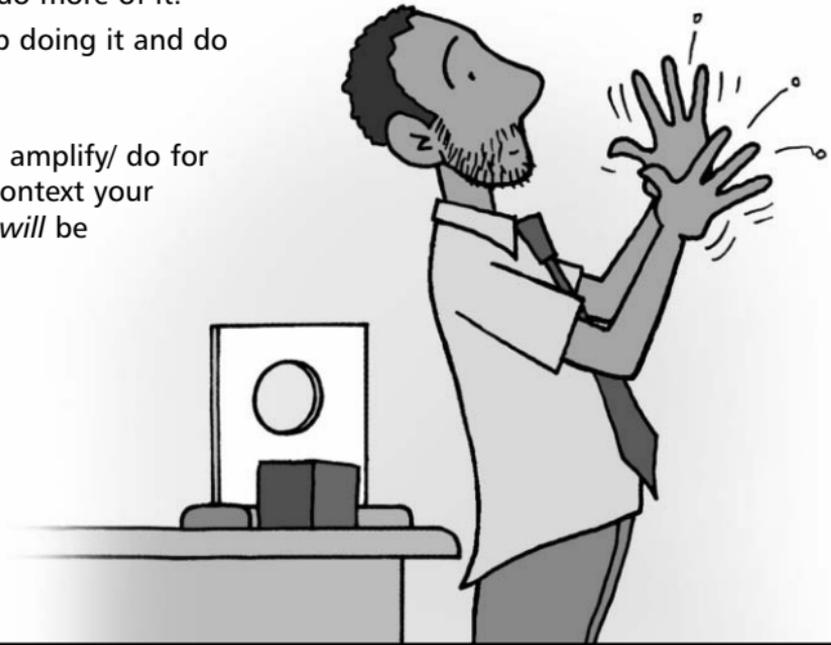
1. Moving towards a solution is far more useful than moving away from a problem.
2. People are experts in their own world.
3. People have preferred futures.
4. People have a wealth of strengths and resources.
5. All problem patterns have exceptions (when it's better/more manageable, etc).

Coaching for solutions



6. Small changes in the right direction often lead to bigger changes.
7. Find what works and do more of it.
8. If it isn't working, stop doing it and do something differently.

It's a simple truth – if you amplify/ do for longer/ do in a different context your 'success behaviours', you *will* be more successful!



About the author

Andy Vass



Andy Vass has been in education for 40 years as a teacher, trainer and coach. Co-author of the *Behaviour Management Pocketbook*, he has a national and international reputation for the quality and impact of his work. Andy was described by TES as '*one of the foremost trainers in the UK*' and one whose '*approach challenged conventional thinking*'. His innovative and creative approach supports lasting change and has a proven record of helping people and organisations be the best version of themselves it's possible to be.

Andy offers a wide variety of coach training which is accredited by the Institute of Leadership and Management. His workshops are characterised by lively energy, a strong sense of humour and very practical skills rooted in the context of schools today.

Many schools have used his fully supported training manual containing all the materials a school would need to develop coaching training in house.

Coaching and Mentoring – a skills development programme is available through Andy's website www.andyvass.net