

## **Solution-Focused Strategies In TDM Meetings**

This concept is not just a matter of using techniques or different types of questions. In order for a strengths-based, solution-focused approach to *really* work, one must understand and embrace the philosophy. It is a way of thinking about situations, about people; co-workers, customers, etc. AND, about our interactions with them, i.e., do you believe people have the capacity to resolve their problems? Can a father who hits his child be a good parent? If someone uses drugs, are they still able to contribute to the lives of others?

For professional child welfare staff, it is a sense that our job is not to solve people's problems, but rather to help them re-discover their solutions. A recognition that we do not *know* the answer and a confidence that we do not *have to know* the answer.

The questions (miracle, scaling, etc) and techniques (compliments, language, etc) are merely the tools to make these beliefs come alive.

Problem solving is other guided. It is your best friend coming to you and saying, "here's the deal... what should I do?" You give the answers. You see the picture on the puzzle box and proceed to put the puzzle together.

Solution-finding is done together. Your best friend says, "here's the deal... what should I do?" You start to find out more about 'the deal'. How did it happen? What did others think about it? Did anything like this happen before? What did he/she do about it then? Together, you try to figure it out. It is the pieces of the puzzle given to you slowly and you work with your friend to put the picture together one piece at a time until a recognizable scene emerges.

In TDMs, you have the ability to truly be curious. You don't know about the situation. The image is brought forward through the worker's description, the family and their supports' recounting of the details, the community representative's query and through your questions and summary. It is a prime opportunity to use this approach as everyone explores a safe placement alternative.

## Scaling Questions

Scaling for the team's sense of success.

- "On a scale from 0 to 10, 0 meaning there is no chance it will work, 10 meaning this is the best thing since sliced bread, what is everyone's sense that this plan will be ok in keeping the children safe?"

Scaling for confidence.

- "From 0 to 10, Ms. Johnson, how confident are you that you can do what you said by next Monday?"

(Follow-up)

- "What will it take for you to feel more confident?"
- "Is there anything that your sister here can help you with to achieve that?"

## Relationship Questions

- "What would the children say is the most important thing we talk about today?" Gets to the real need, keeps everyone focused on the purpose of the meeting
- "How would the children rate this plan on a scale from 0 to 10?"
- To the parent, "How would your mother/brother/sister rate how well you are following through with your treatment plan, from 0, not at all, to 10, everything is accomplished?"

## Exception-Finding

- "How did working with that counselor make a difference?"
- "Can you tell us how you were able to get the kids off to school everyday even with so much going on in your life?" (Indirect Compliment)
- "I know that we talked about the relapse you had a couple of months ago, but can you tell us how you have managed to remain sober these last two months?"
- To the worker, "You mentioned that there are times when Ms. Johnson has kept everything under control, what do you think helped her to do that?"

## Compliments

Indirect compliments imply something positive about the person

- To the parent, "The foster mother mentioned how well behaved your son is, you must have taught him well"
- "According to everyone here, you have made a lot of positive changes, what do you think is the most noticeable to your children?"
- To the foster parent, "How did you know to contact the worker when things weren't going well?"