



Career Learning
as a Success Factor
for Lifelong Learning

Coaching for Career Learning



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Teaching tool



EN



This teaching tool is made for the benefit of the Development of Innovation project

Career Learning as a Success Factor for Lifelong Learning

2010-3662/001-001



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www.careerlearning.eu

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All materials of this final product have been collegially agreed upon by all project partners.



Lifelong
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This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.

This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



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Introduction

Young people studying at high school or in their first years at university go through a very intensive period of thinking about their future and planning their careers. It often happens that it is too difficult for the young person to cope with all the potential problems on their own. What is really needed is the support and patient attention of parents, teachers and counsellors.

The students participating in the panels of the project 'Career Learning as a Success Factor for Lifelong Learning' vividly expressed their need to share their problems – personal, educational and career-related - with professionals who can support them. Following careful analysis of the students' opinions, a coaching toolkit was developed to support young people in the processes of career building and coping with educational problems.

The role of a coach can be played by a teacher, a job counsellor or a fellow student. The process of coaching a student by a student contributes to the development of a more analytical approach, more positive attitudes towards systematic career planning, and an atmosphere of trust and openness.

The materials presented here should help everyone to understand that:

- we all possess certain resources that we can use to deal with problems
- building a positive image of the future brings us closer to the fulfilment of our dreams and career plans
- employability and attractiveness on the job market depend not only on formal education and qualifications, but also, to a large extent, on personal soft skills and competencies.

Learning outcomes

The materials are presented in two modules. These comprise exercises, together with descriptions and explanations. The two modules can be used together as one longer workshop, or separately, depending on needs, preferences and time constraints.

Generally, it is expected that participants will:

- gain an understanding of what coaching is
- gain an understanding of what a solution focused approach is, in contrast to a problem focused approach
- learn how to identify work and career related problems using coaching techniques
- be able to visualize and define career related goals and personal goals
- be able to use non-suggestive questioning techniques to support someone else or themselves in independent thinking and conclusion forming
- extract the resources they possess and use them to reach their desired career goals



- learn how to focus on solution identification rather than problem analysis in the process of achieving career related goals.

The Target Group

The workshop is designed to be used by teachers, trainers and job counsellors who work with young people aged 18-22 studying in high schools, vocational schools or universities.

How to Use the Materials

The materials are intended to be used during short meetings with young people, in both individual and group settings, or during a longer workshop. Teachers, career advisors or pedagogy specialists may use the materials in the form presented or modify them to suit the needs of the group they are working with.

The exercises involve the participants in an active way and allow them to play both the role of a supportive coach and a person that is being supported. They also create opportunities for the participants to share problems they have and their dreams and plans for their future, particularly their career plans and concerns. This, hopefully, will create a spirit of openness and trust among the workshop participants. The materials may be modified for use with individuals.

The suggested durations of the exercises are estimates and may vary depending on the size of the group, the pace of work and other factors.

Useful Information

The Definition of Coaching: International Coaching Federation

In exploring the concept of coaching, it is worth considering the definition of the International Coaching Federation, a worldwide organization for professional coaches.

“The ICF defines coaching as partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential.”¹

In working with a client, a coach is expected to:

- discover, clarify, and align with what the client wants to achieve
- encourage client self-discovery
- elicit client-generated solutions and strategies
- hold the client responsible and accountable.²

¹ <http://www.coachfederation.org/intcoachingweek/about-coaching/>



Following these guidelines, coaching methods may be used in many spheres of life: personal, professional or even health. It is important to remember that coaching is a partner relationship based on a client's free will, and it requires respect for each client, their individuality, needs and choices.

Career Coaching

Career coaching could be used effectively with people planning and building their career paths. It lets the client construct a career path in an independent, responsible and reasonable way. A coach accompanies a client in the process of career decision making and provides support in:

- planning a career and preparing a strategy to build it
- identifying the client's strengths and weaknesses
- creating a network of contacts needed in job search and career development
- constructing the client's image of what is important in a job market and in their personal life.

A coach is expected to inspire the client to independently extract the resources they already possess which could be helpful in career development. The coach can share information with a client, but it is the client's responsibility to bear the consequences for their decisions. It is crucial that a coach does not suggestively advise the client as to what should be done, but should, rather, stimulate the person to solve their own problems. The more independent the client is in building a career strategy, the more willing they should be to implement the strategy. A good coach is expected to ask the right questions, not to give answers.

Conversation as a Coaching Tool

Conversation is a basic tool used in individual and group coaching. Following a properly conducted dialogue, a client is able to take measures to make changes, and to plan and implement them. There is no precisely defined framework of a coaching conversation.

During a coaching dialogue, the coach can initiate a discussion on a specific issue of interest to the client, or provoke a different perception by the client. The coach can support the client in remodelling a way of thinking in order to open a new window of opportunity in looking for solutions. It is worth remembering that a coach is expected to provide a client with feedback which is constructive, friendly and inspiring enough for the client to continue the process of development. It has to be remembered that coaching is not a therapy, but a supportive process of positive change.

The guidelines and rules of a good coaching practice are included in The Chartered Chapter of the International Coaching Federation.

The Solution Focused Approach to Coaching

² <http://www.coachfederation.org/intcoachingweek/about-coaching/>



The Solution Focused approach is a client-oriented approach directed towards future solutions. It respects the client's autonomy in defining goals and ways to achieve them. Its future orientation does not altogether exclude past experiences; the client's past is treated as a source of positive resources and competencies that they have successfully used in the past to solve problems and can potentially use again in the future. The process involves abandoning a search for causes of the problem in favour of supporting the client to find solutions that they can define and accept.

The Solution Focused approach starts with some important assumptions:

- Change is inevitable in human life. We can learn how to control a useful change.
- People have the right to perceive their reality in an individual way and to have their perspectives treated as unique and valued.
- Focusing on solutions can be more effective than focusing on problems. Knowing what caused the problem does not guarantee finding a solution.
- There are already-existing solutions that can be identified and used. People have abilities and competencies they can activate to provoke a beneficial change.
- It is easier to control small changes that, in time, will have a bigger impact in the future.

The methodology is presented by Paul Z. Jackson and Mark McKergow as the **SIMPLE** model:

1. **S**olutions not problems

The model has a strong solution orientation. It encourages solution-directed talk with a client which enables the client to identify the point of departure for the solution search.

2. **I**n-between: the action is in the interaction

While looking for already-existing solutions, it is helpful to take a system approach which tells us that things are interdependent. Thus, it is effective to give people the freedom to make small changes, which will have an impact on numerous interdependent elements in the context and provoke a bigger change.

3. **M**ake use of what's there

We have to learn how to identify existing answers and solutions; look for what is there that can be useful and work well.

4. **P**ossibilities: past , present and future

Extracting from the past the resources that a client already possesses, and focusing on the client's positive present actions and on what they really want, will help the client to take a small step towards a desired future vision of the situation.

5. **L**anguage: simply said



Simple, understandable and positive language that compliments the client's behaviours and successes, rather than his intelligence or personality, allows the client to develop an open attitude towards possible inherent changes. The process of building the client's confidence that it is possible for her/him to change positively helps to provoke the possible change.

6. **E**very case is different

An individual should be respected in finding what works, since different things will work for different people. Autonomy in choosing a solution that we own helps us to accept it and supports us in pursuing the desired change.

Four Solution Focused Competencies

An interesting Solution Focused Model of Four SF Competencies is presented by Gwenda Schlundt Bodien.

The model consists of four competencies - helping, directing, training and instructing - that can be used in different situations, depending on where the client has autonomy when making choices, and where they are limited by external goals or external procedures that are imposed.

- Helping is used in the process when a client is supported in formulating their goals and exploring the ways to achieve them.
- Directing is used when a client is restricted by imposed external goals, yet has the freedom to choose what works for them as ways to achieve those goals.
- Training is used in the process when a client has autonomy in defining their own goals but is restricted by external boundaries with regard to how to achieve the goals.
- Instructing is used when a client is restricted both by the external goals and external ways to achieve them.

The model can provide a client with tools that can be very useful in a variety of situations, including the work environment where we are often restricted by external goals or procedures. The material that is presented here, however, uses selected exercises of The Four Solution Focused Competencies model that are close in their philosophy to the type of coaching which gives a client freedom of choice in the realms of both setting goals and finding their preferred ways to achieve them.

Solution Focused Coach Guidelines

The ideas of Brief Coaching and the SIMPLE method provide guidance for coaches adopting a Solution Focused approach in terms of **what to do and what not to do**:

- Work with the client's narrative, avoiding attempts to understand what is really going on.



- Remember to steer the dialogue towards potential solutions. Do not concentrate on problems.
- Look for positive and useful interactions.
- Work with the client on developing a preferred image of the future. Avoid suggesting ideas as to what the client should do.
- Assume the client really knows what they want. Accept the client's way to reach a goal as the only ideal way.
- Believe that the client, drawing on the resources they possess, is able to gradually reach the desired goal. Thus, SF coaches do not amplify the problem, but work with what is there.
- Attempt to be useful, leaving full autonomy to the client to accept or reject any option. Avoid any actions or words that could put the client's autonomy at risk.
- Be positive and optimistic as a SF coach. Compliment your client on how successful their performance and their efforts to improve the situation have been.



Teacher's Notes – MODULE 1

	Objectives	Timing	Comments	Materials
Find a Person Who	Integration of the participants	25-30 minutes	It is possible to prolong the activity and ask participants to have a discussion in smaller groups. Participants can choose the speaker who will present to the whole group and the individual participants	Copies of activity sheet
Contact	Establishing cooperation rules during the workshop	30 – 45 minutes	Before starting the activity, it is worthwhile presenting the theoretical bases of coaching and the coaching principles.	Blackboard, paper, markers
Working with a Metaphor 1 – drawing	Developing skills of perspective change	90 – 120 minutes	It is important to encourage participants to maximize creativity.	Markers, coloured pencils, newspapers, coloured papers, glue, scissors, big cartons (2 for every team involved in an exercise)
Neurological Levels According to Robert Dilts	Identifying the problem and seeking the resources to deal with the problem	45 – 60 minutes	It is important for participants to have a chance to play the roles of coach and client	Blackboard, paper, markers, the list of questions



A Change of Perspective – Working with a Metaphor 2	Developing skills of problem perception change.	45 – 60 minutes	If possible, participants should carry out this activity in an atmosphere of intimacy. They can go out to the hallway or courtyard and talk freely.	Card for the coach
Working with Resources	Identifying and developing the ability to use existing resources to build personal strategies for dealing with a difficult situation.	45 – 60 minutes	Each participant could do it individually; it can be also used as homework.	The list of questions for the coach



Teacher's Notes – MODULE 2

	Objectives	Timing	Comments	Materials
Success Orientation	The aim of the exercise is to extract the resources that we have and can use to establish a positive interaction with others, to build trust and a positive relationship with another person.	20 minutes	It is important for participants to have a chance to play the roles of a coach and client	The list of questions for the coach
The Five Step Interview	Understanding and learning how important it is to take one small step towards the implementation of positive changes.	20 minutes (one talk)		A handout with the five step interview questions
What Makes a Difference?	Identifying differences between a problem approach and a Solution Focused approach.	15-20 minutes	It is important that observers pass accurate feedback on to participants so that participants can correct their action in the future	None
Positive Future Perspective: a Chain Question Exercise	Learning how to ask questions in a way that leads to exploring the client's desired image of the future situation when an existing problem has disappeared.	20 minutes	It is important to emphasize that the client is looking for answers; the coach must refrain from giving advice	None
The Miracle Question Exercise	Helping the client visualize the situation when the problem is resolved, and define the first step that s/he can make to get closer to the desired goal	20 minutes		Handout with questions



<p>Reinforcing Resources and Successes</p>	<p>Identifying and strengthening positive values needed for the achievement of the objective</p>	<p>20-25 minutes</p>	<p>It is important to work in a small group, only three or four participants</p>	<p>Handouts for observers and a coach</p>
<p>Scaling the Progress</p>	<p>Reflecting on the progress that the client has made.</p>	<p>20 minutes</p>		<p>Scaling questions for a coach</p>
<p>Solution Focused Training Principles</p>	<p>Learning and reflection upon the training principles of the Solution Focused approach.</p>	<p>20 – 30 minutes</p>		<p>A handout with SF training principles</p>



Introduction activities

Find a person who ...

Duration

25-30 minutes

Supplies

A table for each participant

Introduction

It is always desirable for participants to learn a little more about one another. Even if the group consists of people who already know one another, by doing this exercise they can learn a little bit more about their attitudes towards the issues that will be discussed later.

Purpose

To integrate the group and gently introduce the topic. The exercise includes elements that introduce the issues to be discussed later, so it lets people meet, break the ice and be introduced to the issues in a friendly and not too serious way.

Instructions

Distribute the table to each person. Ask them to approach other participants, greet them and talk to one person about one issue presented in the table, asking if the person agrees with the statement. If so, ask the person to sign, and turn to another person.



Find a Person Who ...

Find a person who will agree with one of the following statements. Talk to the person for a while and ask them to sign in the box with the statement they agree with. Finish the exercise when you get as many signatures as there are statements in the table.

<p>Is working to improve their communication skills</p>	<p>Systematically works on her/his image</p>	<p>Knows that building a career path is a lifelong process that does not finish with job selection</p>
<p>Believes that improving competencies and tackling weaknesses helps in building a career path</p>	<p>Thinks positively about her/his future career</p>	<p>Willingly supports others to resolve problems and difficulties</p>
<p>Thinks that learning helps in building a career path</p>	<p>Thinks that she/he is empathetic</p>	<p>Is open towards differences in behaviour and attitude</p>



Contract

Duration

30-45 minutes

Supplies

Whiteboard, paper for flip charts, markers

Introduction

Coaching activities require the establishment of concrete rules/a basis for cooperation. Regardless of whether it is individual or a group coaching, a contract between the coach and the participants of the process is necessary. Agreeing a contract means that the coaching has a clearly designated time frame and is based on trust as well as the rules worked out by both sides in the process. Additionally, a contract makes it possible to end the coaching if one of the sides of the process feels that established rules have been infringed or broken.

Purpose

The process of establishing common rules gives the students an opportunity to build trust and develop a feeling of responsibility for the events that will take place during the meeting. The contract increases the involvement of the participants in the process of coaching.

Instructions

All participants work together.

Part I (10-15 minutes)

Give suggestions on how to build a contract between the coach and the participants of the process, based on the rules of coaching presented earlier in the theoretical introduction. Explain why building the contract is important for the success of the process. Explain that during the process, there will be situations in which the participants will coach each other, and that the contract will prove to be a helpful work tool.

Part II (20-30 minutes)

Divide the groups into teams (4 or 5 people each). Each group receives a sheet of paper and markers. Participants work in teams and come up with their own ideas for rules that should govern the workshop.



Module 1: Identifying Problems & Searching for Solutions

Working with a metaphor 1 – drawing

Duration

90-120 minutes

Supplies

Markers, crayons, newspapers, coloured paper, scissors, large sheets of Bristol board (2 per participant)

Introduction

Metaphor, linguistic as well as visual, encourages people to see a given situation from a different perspective, often surprising and unexpected. The problems people face may be analyzed in new ways when a metaphor approach is used; untypical, creative, different representations of a problem in the form of a metaphor emerge.

Purpose

Coaching relations are based mainly on conversation. In this exercise, participants may be coaches for each other. Using coaching conversation and metaphor, they undertake action together which is aimed at identifying the problem, describing it, and finding resources that would enable them to solve the problem.

The purpose of the exercise is to identify the career problems the participants struggle with (i.e. problems connected with choosing the right path of education or future career), analyze the current situation and define the ideal situation.

Taking part in the exercise gives participants an opportunity to learn how to cooperate and how to look for help while solving problems. It allows them to see that working in a group is an opportunity to analyze different, interesting and innovative points of view, and to break patterns and enhance their creativity. The participants engage all their senses in order to deal with a problem, using metaphor and coaching conversation.



Instructions

Work in groups.

Part 1 (5-10 minutes)

Ask the participants to form teams (4 or 5 people per team). Each team gets a set of materials.

Part 2 (10-15 minutes)

In the first part of the exercise, encourage participants to work together in groups and identify a problem which they face in working on their education or career path. It is important that the participants find a problem which is real and important, and which relates to all the team members.

Part 3 (25-30 minutes)

When each team has decided on its problem, ask them to present their problem in the form of a collage, using the materials given. Encourage the participants to be creative.

Part 4 (10 – 20 minutes)

Before discussing the results of the exercise, ask the participants to present their work and describe the problems they represent.

Examples of helpful sum-up questions:

- What does your work represent?
- What is the nature of the problem you are describing?
- How can you deal with this problem?
- Did the group analysis of possible ways to solve a problem lead you to some innovative ideas which had not come to your mind during the individual analysis?
- What steps can be taken in order to solve the problem?
- What would be the first step towards achieving the goal?
- Who or what can help you in solving the problem?
- Does the visualization of the problem make it easier to solve?
- How do you imagine the situation which will occur after the problem is solved?



Part 5 (25-30 minutes)

Ask the participants to prepare a collage once again, this time depicting the situation as it will be after the problem is solved.

Part 6 (15 minutes)

Encourage the participants to show their work. Use helpful sum-up questions:

- Does positive visualization of the problem encourage you to take action?
- What feelings accompany the visualization of a situation in which the problem does not exist?
- Can those feelings be balanced by solving the problem and achieving an ideal situation?



Neurological Levels according to Robert Dilts

Duration

45-60 minutes

Supplies

White board, paper for flipcharts, markers, a list of coaching questions

Introduction

Satisfaction and a sense of coherence in all spheres of life help us to function effectively. According to Robert Dilts, difficulties in one sphere of human activity influence all other spheres. Robert Dilts introduces neurological levels which pervade one another in the realm of human activity. A problem occurring at one level projects onto other levels. The task of a coach is to help the client to stabilize those levels by identifying the problem and finding ways to solve it.

Purpose

To encourage participants to analyze their own activity connected with education and building their career path, in the context of situations that may be difficult for them. To reflect upon the following questions:

- To which sphere of life do those problems refer?
- Where to look for resources which will enable the participants to deal with difficulties?

Instructions

Part I

Present to the participants Robert Dilts' neurological levels. Explain how important it is for successful functioning to have balance in all spheres of life and at all levels of activity.

Neurological Levels according to Robert Dilts:

- goal, mission, spirituality (higher goal which human activity serves)
- identity (individual character, uniqueness of every human being)
- values (rules, beliefs which guide a person through life)
- skills (talents, skills, abilities which help in everyday life)
- behaviours (activities, undertaken actions, reactions to everyday situations)
- environment (the context of human activity: place, time, surroundings)

Part 2 (5-10 minutes)

Ask the participants to form pairs as they wish, so that teams are formed of people who trust each other. One person will take the role of a coach, the other one will present their problem. Ask the participants to present a problem connected with their education or career path. Next, they switch roles.

Give each participant a list of helpful questions but point out that during the conversation it is always good to follow intuition, being sensitive to the other person's problem.

Part 3 (25- 30 minutes)

Tell participants that in the process of asking questions, they should try to use analysis of all the neurological levels to help their partner to identify the resources that will help them to solve the problem.

Stress the fact that it is important for them not to advise their partner, but to concentrate on formulating questions that can help them to solve the problem on their own.

Examples of helpful questions:

- When, where, what time do you want to be more coherent? What did you notice in your surroundings? How does it influence you? What conclusions can you draw from your surroundings? What will you do to become more coherent? How do you want to react?
- What kind of skills do you have/would you like to have? How do you want to use your resources to be more coherent? What can you say about your skills? What was great? What should be improved?
- What is the relationship between your actions and what you believe in? Are your beliefs in accordance with what you do? Which values are important?
- What new beliefs and/or values can you develop on the basis of what you have been through? How do the new values influence your old ones?
- You completed an activity. How did it influence your identity (the person you are)? Are you still the same person? Do you want to change anything in yourself?
- In the name of what ideals did you undertake this activity? Did you do it in the name of an ideal or for some other reason?

Part 4 (5-10 minutes)

Complete the exercise by asking participants to share their opinions about working in pairs. Remind them of their right to privacy.



A Change of Perspective – Working with a Metaphor 2

Duration

45- 60 minutes

Supplies

Coach card

Introduction

A change of perspective, an attempt to look at one's own, often illusory weakness, can help to modify or even eliminate the unwanted behaviour. Engaging one's imagination in projecting a desired behaviour contributes to the effectiveness of human activity.

Purpose

Students have a chance to face their own weaknesses and to attempt to work on those spheres of their behaviour which they would like to change. Projecting a different perspective onto a given behaviour using the metaphor approach encourages self-analysis. Working in pairs deepens the feeling of trust between the participants and creates favourable conditions for shared analysis of the unwanted behaviour.

Instructions

Part 1:

Work in pairs

Ask students to form pairs, as they wish. One person will take on the role of a coach, the other one will be a client talking about a behaviour that they would like to change. Next, the participants switch roles.

Give the students who are coaches cards with information which will help them to conduct the conversation.

Coach's card:

Encourage the client to describe the unwanted behaviour which they would like to change.

1. As a child, you may well have dreamt of becoming an actor/actress. Come back to those dreams for a moment. Imagine yourself sitting in the cinema, looking at yourself from outside. The film you are watching is black and white, and you play a person who has many problems. The weather in the film is truly dreadful. It is dark and gloomy.
2. How do you feel watching this film? Describe your feelings. Would you like to continue playing that role? What makes it so depressing?



3. Suddenly, you are given a chance to create a new, bright and optimistic film.
4. How would you like the person that you are now playing to present herself/himself, to behave?
What does s/he dream about? What are her/his values?

Part 2: (30-45 minutes)

Observe students working.

Part 3 (5 minutes)

Ask the participants to share their opinions and their feelings as well as the effects of the exercise.



Working with Resources

Duration

45-60 minutes

Supplies

Questions for a coach

Introduction

Dealing with difficulties concerning our education or future life depends on having the strengths and means necessary to solve problems. It is important to become aware of the fact that we already possess the resources we need; all we have to do is to look for them.

Purpose

To help participants to undertake self-analysis leading to the discovery of resources needed to solve problems, and to strengthen the positive traits of those participants who have difficulties in dealing with problems. The participants have a chance to support each other in looking for resources and to strengthen their positive characteristics while giving and receiving inspirational feedback.

Instructions

Work in pairs.

Part 1 (10 minutes)

Ask the students to form pairs, according to their own preference. One person takes on the role of a coach, the other one is a client talking about behaviours they want to change. Next, participants switch roles.

Give the coaches cards with information which will help them to conduct the conversation. Encourage them to use the questions in an intuitive way, adjusting them to individual needs.

Part 2 (30-40 minutes)

Tell the participants that difficulties, problems and mishaps happen in the life of every human being. While facing difficulties, we are often short of good ideas as to how to deal with them. In such cases, it is useful to think of a past situation where we successfully dealt with a problem. What or who helped us then? Which of our features, predispositions and actions proved useful in the process? Ask the participants to think of a situation where they successfully solved a problem. Encourage a discussion in pairs (students use the question cards with questions), suggest a switch of roles.



Questions for the coach:

- Can you tell me about a difficult situation that you faced recently?
- I would like to understand this situation better. If I had been a participant in that situation, what would I have seen?
- What did you feel when the situation took place?
- What allowed you to overcome difficulties?
- Can you tell me about the actions you took to overcome the difficulties?
- What other circumstances could possibly help you to overcome those difficulties?
- What was your purpose in taking action?
- Were your actions in accordance with your system of values?
- What do those values mean to you?
- Are these values connected with the dreams and hopes you have?
- What are you dreaming of?
- How can your values help you in making your dreams come true?
- What is the title you would like to give to that story?

Part 3 (5 minutes)

Ask the volunteers to sum up the exercise.



Module 2: Focusing on Solutions

Solution Focused Coaching

Success Orientation

(Source: Gwenda Schlundt Bodien's handout 'Introduction: Four Solution Focused Competencies', 2012. An introductory description has been added by the authors of the Manual.)

Duration

20 minutes

Purpose

The aims of the exercise are to extract the resources that we already have and can use to achieve positive interactions with others, and to build trust and a positive relationship with another person. A reflective approach towards the successes we have had in the past when relating to other people will let us identify competencies that we already possess and can use in the future to support others and ourselves in trying to reach our goals.

The exercise is expected to be helpful both to a client in developing positive attitudes at work, and to a coach in developing competencies to establish positive relations with clients.

Instructions

Work in pairs.

Person 1: Imagine a situation linked to a career or work context in which a person you related to was really pleased with the interaction with you.

Person 2: Have a short conversation with Person 1 using the questions below. Ask additional questions to get the whole picture of the situation. After a few minutes, change roles.

1. Describe in a few minutes a situation linked to career or work context in which you noticed that the person you were talking to was pleased with the interaction with you. Try to describe the situation as vividly as possible.
2. What did you do in the conversation? How did you act?
3. What worked well in this interaction?
4. What resources can you use in future conversations to establish such a positive interaction?



The Five Step Interview

Duration

20 minutes for one interview

Supplies

A handout with the five step interview questions

Purpose

The aims of the exercise are to conduct an interview with a client who has expressed a desire for change, and to support the client in defining the situation as it will be when the change has happened or the problem has been solved. The interview helps the client to identify the resources they possess, and to take a small step towards achieving the desired outcome.

Instructions

Work in groups of three. One person plays the role of a coach, one the role of a client, and one the role of an observer.

Person 1: The coach uses the questions below to conduct an interview with a client who has expressed a desire to effect a change in their career, or to solve a career problem.

Treat the questions only as guidelines for how to proceed. You are not expected always to use them in a rigid way. Be sensitive to what the client says; be ready to acknowledge the client's point of view.

Person 2: A client presents a simple career problem or expresses a desire to provoke a change in their career.

Person 3: An observer records how the process goes, paying attention to the behaviours of the client and the coach. Is the autonomy of the client being respected? Does the client feel comfortable? Can the process be evaluated as useful for both sides? If so, what makes it useful? If not, why?

If there is time, the interview participants change roles.



The Five Step Interview Questions

(Source: Gwenda Schlundt Bodien's handout 'Introduction: Four Solution Focused Competencies', 2012)

Step one: Clarify the problem or desire for change

- What is the problem?
- What would we need to discuss to make this interview useful to you?
- With what can I help you?
- What is bothering you?
- In what way is this a problem for you?

Step two: Describe the desired outcome

- What do you want to achieve?
- What would it be like when the problem is solved?
- How would you notice that the problem is solved?
- What will be better when the problem is solved?
- Suppose you are six months further on and you are satisfied with how things are. What is better now? What is different now? What will you be able to do differently now?

Step three: Determine the platform

- On a scale from 0 to 10 - where 0 is the situation in which nothing has been achieved yet and 10 means the desired outcome has been achieved - where are you now?
- What makes that number? What has already been done to get there?
- What has already been achieved?
- What will be different once you are one step up the scale?



Step four: Analyze previous successes

- When were things reasonably good?
- What is the highest you have been on that scale?
- When were things a little bit better? When was the problem a little less hard?
- When was the 10 a little bit happening?
- What was better then? How did you do it? How did you make that happen?

Step five: One step forward

- What is useful?
- How can you use this?
- What would a small step forward look like?
- What small improvements could you take tomorrow?
- What does that small step look like?
- How would other people notice you had made a small step forward?

The participants of the process are asked to give feedback and reflect upon the Solution Focused interview, evaluating its usefulness for both a coach and a client.



What Makes a Difference?

Problem and Solution Focused Orientations

Duration

15-20 minutes

Supplies

None

Purpose

The exercise allows participants to find the difference between the way of thinking (typical of our civilization) in which we are always prone to focus on a detailed analysis of the problem, and a Solution Focused approach. The latter emphasizes the importance of directing our way of thinking towards possible solutions, even though it may mean that problem analysis will be neglected to a certain extent.

Instructions

Work in groups of three. One person takes the role of a coach, one the role of a client and one the role of an observer. The exercise may be based upon the Five Step Interview and on the same problem.

Person 1: A client presents a simple career problem or expresses a desire to provoke a change in their career.

Person 2: The coach is expected to interview the client, but this time taking a problem-focused approach, asking questions to explore the problem in detail. The coach asks questions that reveal potential causes of the problem.

Person 3: An observer records how the process goes, paying attention to the behaviours of the client and the coach. Is the autonomy of the client being respected? Does the client feel comfortable? Can the process be evaluated as useful for both sides? If so, why? If not, why?

The main task of the observer is to define the differences between solution focused orientation and problem focused orientation towards a career issue presented by the client.

The exercise is followed by feedback given by volunteers from the whole class, reflecting on their impressions, feelings and usefulness of the two approaches.



Another option:

The 'Five Step Interview' and 'What Makes a Difference: Problem and Solution Focused Orientations' exercises are treated as one exercise. Participants do not change roles.

Person 1: A coach conducts the dialogue twice based on the same situation presented by the client. Firstly, based on the problem focused approach, and secondly based on the solution focused approach.

Person 2: A client is asked to remember or imagine a situation that was rooted in the work environment or connected with career building. The situation possibly constituted a problem for the client.

Person 3: An observer records the differences between the above-mentioned approaches.



Positive Future Perspective: a Chain Question Exercise

Learning to ask questions to help a client realize what is desired.

Duration

20 minutes

Purpose

Since asking non-suggestive questions in a way that helps a client to visualize the possibilities of an expected change is of crucial importance for a Solution Focused approach, this exercise is designed to provide practice in this.

The exercise allows participants to concentrate on asking questions in a way that leads to an exploration of the client's desired image of the future situation when an existing problem has disappeared. It gives a coach an opportunity to practise a questioning technique. It creates an opportunity for a client to visualize the desired future situation when the solution to the problem has been found.

Instructions

Work in pairs. One of you plays the role of a coach asking questions. The other one plays the role of a client.

Person 1: The client thinks about a situation connected with career learning or career building they are unhappy about and expresses a desire to change it. The client is asked to describe the situation as clearly and simply as possible.

Person 2: The coach is expected to ask a series of questions which will help the client to create a complete picture of how the situation will look when it is changed. The coach starts with a question based on a desire expressed by the client in relation to their career. Each answer given by the client should form the basis for the coach's next question.

An example:

Client: I'd like to get a bachelor degree,

Coach: **When you get a bachelor degree, what will it change?**

Client: Then I can start looking for a more ambitious job.

Coach: **That's what most people would think first** (normalizing statement). **When you find a better job, what would that change in your life?**

Client: I would be more respected by the people around me.

Coach: **If you are more respected by people you know, what changes will it lead to in your private life/your career?**



The Miracle Question Exercise

Duration

20 minutes

Supplies

Questions for a coach

Purpose

Solution Focused coaching addresses the future situation in a positive way, based on the belief that the client is the expert who best knows what they want, and so is able to set their own goals and to find ways to gradually achieve the goals.

The purpose of this exercise is to help the client to visualize the situation they would like to achieve when the problem is resolved, and to define the first step that they can make to get closer to the desired goal. This empowers the client by allowing them to see the desired future reality, and to identify a realistic measure that can be taken to get closer to it.

Instructions

The first step: The coach first asks the client to describe a problem connected with career planning/building, or a problem at work. The coach listens and learns about it.

The second step: The coach presents the miracle situation to the client:

Imagine that one night you wake up and you discover that while you were asleep, a miracle happened and everything you wanted to happen in your career has just taken place. Relax. Imagine the situation concerning your career after the miracle has happened. Describe the situation.

Consider the following questions:

- How would you know and be able to explain that the miracle happened?
- What will you see that is different from the situation now?
- What will you hear that is different from the situation now?
- What will you feel that is different from the way you feel now?
- What other symptoms and features of what has changed can you identify and describe?
- What will be different from now?
- What would other people notice, hear, feel, identify, that is different about you and your situation?
- How would you behave differently towards them after the miracle?



- How would they behave differently towards you after the miracle?
- What would you like about your new situation most?
- Think about one small step forward that you can make to get a little bit closer to the situation after the miracle happened. This should be one little realistic move that you can easily make.

After the exercise, have a discussion with the whole group, ask participants for feedback, discuss the usefulness of the exercise.



Reinforcing Resources and Successes

Duration

20-25 minutes

Supplies

Handouts for observers and a coach

Purpose

Since the client has defined and visualized her goal, they can - alone and with the assistance of others - work on amplifying their strengths and successes, looking back in time and exploring the competencies and skills they used in the past to reach their goals. The presence of others - a coach and an observer - can help the client to identify the skills that alone they might overlook or underestimate. Identifying competencies that the client possesses means rediscovering the existing resources of the client, resources that they can use in the future to achieve desired outcomes.

Instructions

Work in groups of three or four. One of you plays the role of a client, one the role of a coach and one or two others the role of observers. Having two observers can help in getting a more objective picture and avoiding the risk of overlooking important resources that a client possesses.

Person 1: The client is asked to think about a past situation connected with work or career planning or building; a situation that they evaluate as a success. A success should be understood as something meaningful and useful to the client. It is important for the client to try to remember as many details of the situation as possible.

Person 2: The coach interviews the client about the past success, trying to get as many details as possible.

The coach is trying to explore the situation deeply:

- How did it happen that the client achieved success?
- What did the client do to turn the situation into a success?
- Did the client use their positive resources before in a successful way?
- Can the client explain why they find that behaviour useful?
- Does the client think that it is possible to use this behaviour/competency more often? In what situations? With whom?
- What difference would it make in the client's career/ job/ work situation?



Persons 3 and/or 4: Observers pay attention to the details that can be translated into the client’s strengths and positive resources and write them down. How did it happen that the client achieved success? What did the client do to turn the situation into success? Did the client use their positive resources before in a successful way?

The observers are also expected to write down questions that they classify as useful for the client in the observed interaction.

Observer	Client’s Behaviours & Resources	Useful questions
Observer 1	1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.	1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.
Observer 2	1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.	1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.



Persons 2, 3 & 4: After the coaching interview is finished, the coach and the observers exchange their observations and discuss positive feedback that they will give to the client.

They also discuss how to phrase the compliments. These should refer to positive behaviours and avoid referring to the client's intelligence or personality in order to stimulate a growth mindset rather than a fixed mindset (as demonstrated by Carol Dweck, a Stanford University psychologist, who found that intelligence and talent are just starting points in personal development). When people believe they can develop their abilities, talents and intelligence due to hard work, it stimulates positively their growth mindset.

The coach and the observers compliment the client when giving feedback.



Scaling the Progress

Duration

20 minutes

Supplies

Scaling questions for a coach

Purpose

Having visualized her/his goal and defined the next step they would take to move closer to the goal, the client should come to a point in the change process when they wish to reflect on the progress that has been made. Solution Focused coaching advocates a scaling exercise to evaluate progress.

Instructions: Work in pairs as a coach and a client.

Person 1: The client is asked to come back to the problem situation connected with work or career building.

Person 2: The coach asks the client several questions. These will allow the client to undertake a step-by-step evaluation of how the situation has changed since the problem occurred, and to discover specific actions that they have so far taken to improve it, even though the improvement may not yet be fully realized. Finally, the exercise supports the client in defining one small step that they can take to improve the current situation and move towards the desired outcome.

Scaling Questions:

1. Imagine a scale from 0 to 10. The ten represents achievement of the goal that you visualized, the situation you would like to be in regarding your career. 0 represents the situation where the problem has occurred and nothing has yet been done to improve it.
2. Where are you now on the scale? What tells you that you are at that point on the scale?
3. How did you reach your current position on the scale? What resources did you use to get where you are now? What worked well? What was helpful for you in moving from 0 to the current point? Be very specific in describing concrete actions and aspects.
4. Have you ever been at a higher point than now? Has the situation connected with your career path ever been more advanced? If so, what was different? What worked well? How did you do things differently?
5. Suppose you were one point higher than you are now. How different would the situation be with regard to your career? How would you recognize you are one point higher? How would the new situation be better for you? What could you potentially do in the job context?
6. Suppose you were two numbers higher. What would happen that would let you know and be able to say that you had made a real improvement?



7. Do you think that the conversation we are going through is useful to you? If so, specify what is useful in this conversation? Could you explain what it will take for you to make one small step forward to improve your career situation now? Could you describe this step in detail?
8. Who would be potentially helpful to you in taking this one step forward? What would these people do that would be useful to you?



Solution Focused Training Principles

(Source of this exercise is Gwenda Schlundt Bodien's handout 'Introduction: Four Solution Focused Competencies', 2012. An introductory description has been added by the authors of the Manual.)

Duration

20 -30 minutes

Supplies

A handout with SF training principles

Purpose

The aim of this exercise is to learn about and reflect upon the training principles of the Solution Focused approach, using a friendly and gentle approach. It allows the coach to identify their preferred principles, and so reinforces the concept of ensuring the highest possible autonomy for clients during Solution Focused interactions and discussions. It is expected that the client will always be assured maximum autonomy in making decisions and choices

Instructions

Work in groups of six people. Read the following principles of the Solution Focused method. Choose a few that appeal to you most. Explain to your group why you chose them.

Answer the questions:

- Is there something useful to you?
- If so, which aspects of the SF approach are most useful to you?
- How can you use what you find useful? In what situations can you use it?

Discuss with your group the weight of other principles on the list.



Solution Focused Training Principles Handout

1. Support the participant's autonomy in formulating her/his own goals

Solution Focused training implies that the student has the freedom to choose what they want to achieve and that the trainer does not impose a goal upon the student. When people feel they are making an autonomous choice, they are more likely to be intrinsically motivated to achieve their goal.

2. Provide choice regarding the usefulness of external solutions

Solution Focused training implies that there are external solutions available and that these are offered by the trainer. However, the student is free to choose which solutions are useful for them. By providing choice, the trainer supports autonomous decision making, which will increase the likelihood that the student feels the solution could work for them.

3. Offer advice and help when requested by the participant or when the participant appreciates receiving advice

When the student asks for advice (tips, knowledge, information etc.) the trainer offers advice and subsequently asks if this could be useful to the student. If the trainer thinks they have valuable advice to offer, they ask for permission to give this advice and formulate it tentatively, so that the student is still free to decide whether or not the advice is useful to her/him.

4. Activate the participant

Solution Focused training implies that the trainer activates the participant by asking questions and offering an opportunity to experience something. Theory is linked to the participant's experience and is preferably offered in an interactive manner. Questions activate a thinking process. Because the participant is asked to explain what they already know about the topic of the training, they will understand it better and remember it better. The process of explaining helps us to be actively involved and makes our knowledge explicit.

5. Enhance a feeling of competence by focusing on the problem

Solution Focused trainers acknowledge that the participant is already competent to a certain extent and help the participant become aware of this level of competence. The platform consists of the knowledge and skills that the participant already possesses.

6. Focus on usefulness for the participant

Solution Focused training focuses on what is useful to the participant by asking usefulness questions: at the start (What would make this training useful to you? How would you notice afterwards that this training had been useful to you?); in the middle (Has it been useful to you so far? Is this being useful to you?); and at the end of the training (Was it useful? If so, what was most useful to you? How can you use the useful elements in the future?)



7. Provide positive process feedback

Solution Focused trainers give direct and indirect compliments, so that the participant becomes aware of what worked well in what they did. This sort of feedback stimulates a growth mindset. The Solution Focused trainer avoids giving compliments regarding intelligence or personality traits, or negative feedback regarding intelligence, personality traits or errors made by the participant, since this sort of feedback stimulates a fixed mindset.

8. Help the participant to improve their reasoning for themselves by asking leading questions and by normalizing

If the participant makes a mistake, the Solution Focused trainer asks questions that invite them to go through their thinking process step by step: How did you arrive at the answer? How could you improve your answer even more? This lets participants improve their way of thinking themselves. The Solution Focused trainer avoids pointing out errors directly but instead asks questions which imply that improvement is possible. The Solution Focused trainer also normalizes errors (That's what most people would think at first ...).

9. Fulfil the need to feel connected

When people feel connected, they are more likely to be intrinsically motivated to learn. Therefore, the trainer creates an encouraging and appreciative atmosphere in which the other person can feel connected, by acknowledging the other's perspective without blame or judgement.



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