






101 Coaching Supervision Techniques, Approaches, Enquiries and Experiments.

Solution Focused Chapter: Technique 79 (pages 268-270)

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The Tomorrow Question

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Where can this be used?				Typical Level of Supervisee Experience Required	
 Individual Supervision			 Independent Reflection	 All levels	

When is this used?

Useful when a supervisee is finding it particularly difficult to connect with their client and/or is feeling very 'stuck'. The supervisee might be finding it difficult to come up with ideas about what they can do or believe they have 'tried everything' without success.

What is the technique?

Based in the Solution Focused approach, a question is offered which serves to leapfrog the current dynamic and open up new areas of exploration to create a new way forward.

Step 1: Seek permission to experiment with a more future focused exploration.

Step 2: Discuss what would be a good outcome for the supervisee by asking for example "What differences would you like to see in your working relationship with this client as a result of this supervision?"

Step 3: Help the supervisee craft a few words which capture the essence of this discussion, as you will use this in Step 4 e.g. [good sense of connection with this client].

Step 4: Support the supervisee to recall how resourceful they are... picking up on the output of Step 3 invite the supervisee to talk about other occasions (either with this client or any other) when their aspired future state was present.

Step 5: The supervisor asks "If you woke up tomorrow and discovered that something had happened which resolved all the difficulties you are experiencing ... that suddenly your [connection with this client] was exactly what you had hoped for.... What would be the first difference that you would notice?"



Step 6: Continue the exploration in an iterative fashion considering how each difference noticed in one party prompts a noticing of difference in the other. For example:

- What might be the first difference that you notice in you?
- And if your client were to notice that, how do you think they would respond?
- So, when you then respond to your client, what other differences do you notice in you?

Step 7: Support the supervisee to connect with their aspired future state. For example; Following this conversation, imagine that you find yourself doing something different, however small, when you next sit with the client... what might it be? What else? And what else?

Step 8: Consider if it would be helpful to elaborate this by looking at how they will know if they have moved one point better (see SF Scaling Technique #76 pp. 260-263).

Step 9: The supervisor offers some words of appreciation, perhaps reflecting back those resources the supervisee articulated and which resonated for the supervisor. Where the supervisee has noted some improvement, the supervisor might reinforce what the supervisee had done to get to the current point. Additionally, offer appreciation regarding how the supervisee has engaged with this process.

Step 10: To close out the work check-in with the supervisee to see what they now need from the supervision.

How to work with the technique...

Once you have established a form of words that capture the desired outcome for the supervisee, it is important to use their words just as they are even if they feel awkward to the supervisor. Step 6 really helps the client to see something different and then to focus on how they would be different with the client. It may be helpful to continue this exploration – for example, if the supervisee says they will feel more confident, a follow up question like “What will that look like?” or “How will you know?”, will typically elicit still further information. In Step 7 the supervisee may question what you mean by ‘now’ as often something will have already shifted within the session, compared to where they started. Interestingly, the questions about positive difference often prompt a shift in energy which yields a sense of resolution, the supervisee relaxes and is less occupied with what is causing the problem or what they might do next.

A word of caution.

This technique was adapted from de Shazer’s work, who invited the client to consider how it would be if a ‘miracle’ had happened. Whilst intended as a metaphor, the word ‘miracle’ can trigger more emotive reactions. Therefore, whilst alternative phrases might be useful, be careful to use neutral language.



What other uses are there for this technique?

Once familiar with the technique, this may be of use with coaching clients.

Further Reading:

Connie, E. (2012) Solution Building with couples: A solution focused approach – ‘The most amazing thing I have ever heard a client say’. *Context*. June 2012, pp.6-9.

de Shazer, S. (1988) *Clues: Investigating Solutions in Brief Therapy*. New York: Norton.

Ratner, H., George, E. and Iveson, C. (2012) *Solution Focused Brief Therapy: 100 Key Points and Techniques*. London: Routledge.