








## 101 Coaching Supervision Techniques, Approaches, Enquiries and Experiments.

Solution Focused Chapter: Technique 76 (pages 260-263)

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### Solution Focused Scaling Questions

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

#### When is this used?

When supervisees identify work as stalled and failing to progress, the progress already made can be obscured, making it harder for supervisees to recall what they have done that has been useful. Solution Focused (SF) Scaling Questions can highlight the progress already achieved, providing a framework within which that progress can be accessed and leveraged.

This approach offers a flexible conversational framework which can serve to highlight and to clarify the key elements of the change process, such as:

- Coach and client resources.
- Effective strategies.
- Progress made.
- Indicators of further progress.

#### What is the technique?

The most generic formulation of the question, used in supervision is “On a scale of 0 to 10 with 0 representing how things were when you started working with this client and 10 representing confident and successful closure where would you put things now?”

**Step 1:** Ensure that the scale is anchored, that the points 0 and 10 have been clearly defined.

**Step 2:** Elicit the supervisee’s view on how far the work has reached.

**Step 3:** Consider using any or all of the following frequently used subsidiary questions:



- What tells you that you have reached that point?
- What have you done that has been helpful in reaching that point?
- What have you noticed about your own capacities in reaching that point on the scale?
- How will you know that the work has moved just one point up on the scale?

Note: The client's perspective is also routinely incorporated by re-framing the above questions – for example question one would become “Where would your client say that the work has reached?”

**Step 4:** In each of these areas of focus, continue to elicit greater detail for example, “So what else have you noticed that puts things at 6 and not back at 0?”. It is in the supportive persistence that supervisees are likely to generate and to articulate new thoughts about their work.

**Step 5:** At the end of supervision invite the supervisee to pay particular attention to tiny evidences of change in forthcoming sessions and to what they are doing that is associated with this progress.

#### How to work with the technique...

Choice of language is significant, particularly in the framing of the ‘one point up’ question. Choosing the more ‘strategic’ framing “So *what do you need to do* to move the work up by just one point?” consistently proves less effective (Ratner et al. 2012 pp. 125 - 126) than an alternative ‘evidential’ framing of the question. The strategic framing risks reminding the supervisee that they do not know what to do, whereas the evidential framing “*How will you know* that the work has moved ...” has an embedded suggestion that the supervisee is capable of knowing and that the work will move up, thereby tending to engage the supervisee’s imagination and creativity. Typically, this will open up a range of new potential options for action, allowing the supervisee to choose the most appropriate of those possibilities in the moment.

Supervisors new to using the SF Scaling question are often tempted to quickly move towards a description of ‘one point up’ on the scale. Experienced practitioners will spend twice as long ‘unpacking’ where the work has already reached before describing how the supervisee will know that the work has progressed by a further point.

#### Word of caution.

The SF approach chooses to assume that both clients and supervisees are at all times giving of their best to make the conversation useful. Therefore, if the supervisee is struggling to answer the supervisor’s questions, or struggling to provide detail, then the SF supervisor’s assumption is that they are asking the wrong question, or moving at the wrong pace, or have not made the purpose of the questions sufficiently clear. If what we are doing does not seem to be working *the onus is on the supervisor to do something different.*



### **What other uses are there for this technique?**

Scale questions can be straightforwardly re-framed to focus on, for example, the supervisee's confidence in the likelihood of change or the supervisee's professional development. Once familiar with the approach it can equally be applied in one to one coaching and in team coaching. Teams can, for example, be asked to scale "How effectively are we communicating?" or "How well do we support each other at times when things are tough?"

### **References**

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

### **Further Reading**

Iveson, C., George, E. and Ratner, H. (2012) *Brief Coaching: A Solution Focused Approach*. London: Routledge.

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Thomas, F. (2013) *Solution-Focused Supervision: A Resource-Oriented Approach to Developing Clinical Expertise*. New York: Springer.