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## INTRODUCTION

Solution focused brief therapy is fast becoming the 'base-line' approach for organisations offering care. From psychiatry to social housing, justice to education this collaborative approach to work with people in need is proving its exceptional effectiveness.

The solution focused philosophy is also becoming increasingly popular in management teams where collaboration has become a means to efficient use of resources.

The BRIEF is now one of Europe's leading training organisations in solution focused approaches.

A radical shift . . .

What makes solution focused brief approaches so radical is the notion that problems do not need to be understood, agreed or even recognised in order for resolutions to be found. This ability to by-pass problems and move directly towards their solutions marks a radical break with the traditions of therapy and management. So much so that it is only its strong evidential base that saves it from incredulity!

. . . and efficient

Solution focused approaches are applicable to any 'project' concerning the future. This could be the future of a person referred for counselling, a team wishing to excel, a manager wishing his or her team to excel or an organisation wishing to achieve a particular goal.

Its effectiveness as far as its users are concerned has been demonstrated beyond doubt. 80% of brief therapy 'customers' report lasting improvement; the average rating of brief therapy courses is 85% and though no formal research has been undertaken with managers anecdotal evidence suggests many have found solution focused tools to be the most useful ever.

## COURSES SUMMARY

Because solution focused ideas can be adapted to almost any endeavour, BRIEF has developed an extensive array of tailor-made courses to supplement its regular programme.

Apart from variations on our standard introductory and follow-up courses we offer courses in:

- Supervision and consultation
- Solution focused child protection
- Solutions in education
- Solutions with children and adolescents
- Solutions in mental health
- Solutions with drug and alcohol users
- Solutions in challenging situations
- Solutions in housing management
- Building co-operation with reluctant clients

We also provide training for organizational and management contexts, such as leadership and coaching.

We can provide training and consultations to teams and organisations wanting to develop a solution focused culture within their own structures.

## **AIMS OF COURSES**

1. Introduce the basic principles and techniques of solution focused brief practice, therapy and consultation.
2. Provide opportunities to discuss the principles and to practice the techniques.
3. Consider and develop applications to the tasks and responsibilities of the participants.
4. Enable course members to introduce these skills into their everyday practice.
5. Develop consultation and supervisory skills.

## **TEACHING METHODS**

Solution focused brief therapy is a practical approach and the teaching method reflects this. Courses have a large element of practice exercises all designed to develop skills directly relevant to the task of doing and supervising direct work with clients. These are in pairs, threes, small and large groups and all are concerned with the development of skills.

Practical exercises are usually supplemented by videotaped extracts of actual work with clients (all of whom have given their consent to the tape being made and shown for teaching purposes) around issues of relevance to course members. The course tutor may also demonstrate these skills directly with course members.

Finally there will be theoretical input and discussion, both of which will be in the service of skills development.

Each participant on our practitioner course will receive a copy of BRIEFER, the unique solution focused practice manual provided on BRIEF'S courses. This booklet will provide participants with a handy reference tool for future practice.

## CHOOSING A COURSE

Solution focused practice provides a straightforward framework for dealing with client problems and problems between clients and agencies. Its principles can also be adapted to organisational issues, supervision and consultation. It's a practical approach and therefore one which improves with practice.

All courses are designed with that in mind so all include opportunities to practice solution focsed interviewing skills. The more practice the better equipped is each participant to transfer new skills into the workplace. A two-day course is the minimum length required to begin to make an impact on everyday practice. Three- and four-day courses give much more of a chance to assimilate and adapt the new skills to the tasks and responsibilities of the agency. Longer courses are also able to provide a framework for continued peer development.

When deciding on the optimum length of a course an important factor will be whether the intention is to make a significant impact on the way staff work. Just as important will be the budget and BRIEF will do whatever it can to match a course to the commissioning agency's needs and budget.

If an organisation is considering a number of different approaches and ideas and the training is intended to stimulate thinking and discussion then our one-day workshops are very successful. They cover some of the same ground as a longer course but it cannot be assumed that they will have a significant effect on practice.

### COURSE CONTENT

The following programme is a guideline to course content and can be adapted to each agency's particular needs. The final programme for any course will be decided in consultation with the commissioner.

## **OUTLINE PROGRAMME FOR PRACTITIONERS: TWO TO FOUR DAYS**

### **DAY ONE**

Problem Free Talk: working with the 'whole' client, starting with a resource and competency base, validation and rapport.

Setting the 'Contract': establishing the client's hopes from the work and aligning these with agency goals.

Exploring the Preferred Future: finding out where the client wants to get to, squaring this with reality and with agency requirements and responsibilities.

Constructive Feedback: constructing and giving feedback based on what the client is thinking, feeling and doing to orient them towards the lifestyle they have identified as their preferred future.

### **DAY TWO**

Discovering Instances of Success: beginning to find out what the client is already doing to reach his or her preferred future, finding out about the times the problem doesn't happen or is less severe, building on the client's own achievements and unique ways of getting things done.

Scaling Questions: using scales to define where the client is in relation to their preferred future, identifying achievements and defining 'the next small step'. Measuring movement throughout the course of work with a client.

## DAY THREE

The third day will be structured around a series of exercises aimed at adapting solution focused ideas to everyday work with clients and their professional networks. These exercises will involve simulations based on participants' current workloads in which the core skills learned during the first two days will be applied to situations course members are likely to be facing in their everyday work.

Issues covered will be tailored to the needs of participants and might include

- Second and subsequent sessions: building on the smallest signs of progress, as well as dealing with setbacks.
- 'Hopeless' cases
- Developing co-operation
- Dealing with 'relapse'
- Assessment

## DAY FOUR

The fourth day will continue the process of practicing the integration of solution focused skills. There will be additional opportunities to deal with specific agency-related practice issues. If there has been an opportunity for participants to put their learning into practice between the third and the fourth days then this will be especially productive as it will be addressing live issues arising directly from the practice of solution focused interventions.

The day will also provide a framework for continued peer supervision which has proved to be the most effective means of maintaining and developing the momentum created by the course.

## **FOLLOW-UP DAYS**

Regular follow-up days will

- Maintain and increase skill levels
- Increase general job satisfaction
- Enhance the overall working relationships of an organisation.

Follow-up days are available to support and enhance practice development over the first few months. The programme is flexible to accommodate the needs of members while at the same time focusing on practice. Building on course members' experience these follow-up days are likely to cover difficult and challenging applications, special circumstances, methods of supervision and organisational issues.

The value of follow-up days, which might be spread over six-monthly to yearly periods, is that they help staff maintain their skill level and their commitment to the approach. Because basic courses are very much briefer than most other counselling and therapy courses the continued value relies heavily on the personal commitment of those who have attended. When follow-up courses are offered as a regular back-up staff are much more able to stay brief.

A secondary value is that solution focused courses are renowned for re-charging batteries and for enhancing working relationships. The benefits to organisations are therefore greater than just the skills developed by participants.



## ONE DAY WORKSHOPS

One day workshops provide an overview of the approach and an opportunity to try out some of the interviewing techniques involved.

The basic elements of solution focused brief practice will be introduced:

- Problem-free contexts
- Defining achievable and supportable preferred futures
- The significance of instances of the preferred future already happening
- Using scaling questions to measure progress
- Constructive feedback

Participants will have an opportunity to practice at least two areas of interviewing and some may be able to transfer this experience to everyday work.

One-day workshops will use case examples relevant to the agency but there will only be limited opportunity to explore specific agency issues in any depth.

## SPECIALIST COURSES

BRIEF can offer introductory and advanced courses adapted to most specialisms. Most popular requests are for courses adapted specifically for

- staff in schools
- adult mental health services
- children and adolescents services
- drug and alcohol work
- Probation
- disability services
- supervision
- meetings
- groupwork

We have also arranged courses for GPs, hospice workers, staff counselling services, housing associations, youth justice, old age and dementia services, and family lawyers. Because BRIEF team members specialise in 'difficult' cases we take on work from any source and so have relevant hands-on experience of most areas of work.

Specialist courses follow the same basic programme as other courses but draw on more examples from within that specialism and identify ways to adapt 'therapeutic' questions to the job in hand: GPs will practice asking questions that orient their patients towards developing better health, teachers will explore ways of introducing solution focused ideas into the classroom, and housing workers will explore ways to work with vulnerable tenants in ways that meet the tenants' needs *and* get the rent paid!

The aim of *every* course is to equip each participant with tools that will enhance their effectiveness at work whatever their job might be.

In response to the huge demand from the field of education BRIEF team members have undertaken as much work with schools and students as possible. They have counselled children, young people and parents both in schools and at BRIEF; they have provided consultations to individual teachers as well as to staff and management teams; they have worked with groups of young people and have taught young people to become counsellors for their own peer counselling services. This experience has provided the foundation for the Solutions in Education courses which can be adapted to the tasks of teaching, behavioural support, special needs, learning mentors, career guidance, education welfare and educational psychology or to mixed groups containing any combination of education professionals.

Programmes for Education will follow the same lines as generic courses in so far as they will explain and illustrate the main elements of solution focused practice and provide opportunities for participants to practice techniques relevant to their workplaces.

One day programmes have proved especially popular for teaching staff wishing to acquire simple counselling skills alongside their primary interest in teaching. Staff with a more pastoral function or who frequently engage with individual pupils usually find a single day too short to provide a working foundation for continued application of solution focused ideas.

*For more information visit [www.brief.org.uk](http://www.brief.org.uk)*

# SOLUTION FOCUSED SUPERVISION AND CONSULTATION

BRIEF

Supervision is a complex activity with a range of elements, including information flow in relation to the tasks of the job, time management, support, policy implementation and accountability. This workshop will primarily address the element of task performance and will work from a set of basic assumptions at the centre of which lie the twin ideas of empowerment and co-operation.

- Developing common or mutually compatible agendas
- Agreeing mutually acceptable outcomes
- Discovering and recognising the resources of each staff member
- Bringing out the best of staff and recognising each person's unique way of working effectively
- Developing a range of skills for empowering colleagues in their day to day work with their clients.

Courses will include a variety of exercises built around participants' everyday work issues.

Each participant will receive a course notes handout specifically relating to supervisory work.

## SOLUTION FOCUSED LEADERSHIP

These programmes, usually over two days, will introduce managers to the fundamentals of solution focused thinking and to the techniques that make it work.

The courses are practical with a focus on skill development. Managers will bring their own work issues as the material for group learning.

Managers will leave these programmes not only aware of the possibilities that solution focus offers them but also but also with an enhanced sense of their own competence and potential.

Areas that are covered include:

- Creating a vision of the future
- Discovering hidden potential
- Transforming stress
- Getting the best out of your team
- Dealing with difficult people
- Building co-operation

Solution focused principles offer clear guidelines for the creation of a management structure based on collaboration and making the very most of all available competencies.

*For more information visit [www.brief.org.uk](http://www.brief.org.uk)*

## SOLUTION FOCUSED TEAM COACHING (usually 1 day)

Solution focused team coaching will lead to

- A clearer picture of the team's future
- An awareness of the signs and steps that would herald that future
- A sharper focus on the team's strengths, resources and qualities
- A greater awareness of each individual's unique contribution
- An enhanced sense of expectation and possibility.

### *Best Hopes*

Eliciting each team member's hopes and beginning to shape these into a corporate whole marks the starting point of solution focused team coaching. The importance of each individual is given full recognition and in this way the corporate whole has a firm foundation in the contribution and worth of each employee.

### *The team you aspire to be . . .*

Building on the initial hopes firms up and adds realistic structure to each member's ideas. At this point the individual and team's needs are put together so each shapes the other in the interests of both.

### *Sparkling moments!*

Turning from the future the spotlight moves to the present and past to seek out the foundation for the 'new' team. Evidence of the team's strengths shown in good times and in bad will be sifted and sorted for use in its future. The sparkling moments of yesterday will provide the best clues about possibilities for tomorrow.

### *Movement*

Team coaching should lead to movement. Part of the process is to define clearly what the possible signs of movement might be so they can be recognised when they occur and part is to measure them once they do occur.

# SOLUTION FOCUSED COACHING

These programmes, usually over two days, will give coaches a way of thinking as well as a set of powerful, flexible and adaptable tools which will develop their practice and enhance their effectiveness.

Solution Focused Coaching is a set of conversational skills based on the principles of social construction theory. Participants will learn how to interview in order to identify and maximise the skills their coachees bring to work and to life. Programmes will be highly practical and it is expected that participants will be able to use the skills immediately.

The programmes will address both coaching and mentoring with individuals, as well as work with teams.

The course will provide explanations and opportunities to observe and practice each of the solution focused techniques.

These will include:

- How to uncover hidden strengths
- Collaborative contracting
- Envisioning successful futures
- Discovering the best histories
- Charting progress
- The power of appreciation

Each programme will draw on the skills and experiences of participants to create a unique event.

*For more information visit [www.brief.org.uk](http://www.brief.org.uk)*

## RESOLVING CONFLICT

Conflict is a necessary part of life, including life at work. It is mostly a creative process but occasionally becomes the opposite. When conflict turns destructive individuals, teams and whole organisations are placed at risk. This one day course will teach a set of simple principles aimed not just at managing conflict but also at diverting the energy in conflict to creative use.

This action packed workshop will be equally valuable to those who want to add new skills to their repertoire and those already familiar with solution focused practice who wish to refresh their enthusiasm and hone their skills still further. It will be especially aimed at anyone needing to manage conflict in their everyday work.

Solution focused skills include:

- establishing a common purpose
- listening with a constructive ear
- creating a context for resolution
- eliciting descriptions of possible futures
- discovering what is already working
- building on success
- moving beyond resolution
- measuring progress
- building co-operation
- working with groups

The course will be built around a series of exercises that will allow all participants to practice and evaluate a number of key skills.



**BRIEF**

BRIEF, originally known as The Brief Therapy Practice, was founded in 1989, and was the first group in the UK to recognise the radical potential of solution focused thinking. Team members now spend half their time teaching and half in direct work with clients. Clients from all walks of life and with every type of problem attend our centre or are seen by team members elsewhere: for example, schools and hospitals. Priority is given to public sector referrals of challenging cases and no charge is made for this work when undertaken at BRIEF. Any public sector worker who has attended a course with us can refer such clients and even attend with them. Telephone and internet consultation is also available free of charge to those who have attended courses when a team member is available.

Our commitment is to work with those clients, whatever their age or circumstances, that are seen by the majority of course members. In this way we keep our courses both fresh and relevant.

BRIEF occupies a Victorian building in a quiet street in the City of London rear St Paul's Cathedral, Smithfield Market, the Barbican Centre and St Bartholomew's Hospital. It is just one minute from the Barbican underground station, five minutes from City Thameslink and easily accessible from all mainline stations. The area is rich in history, modern architecture sitting beside Roman ruins, and BRIEF itself could not be more welcoming to its visitors.

Courses are run regularly at BRIEF and in many cities throughout Great Britain and for smaller groups of staff these may be a more economical option than an agency-based course.

Practice members are actively committed to equal opportunities, are registered with the UKCP and subscribe to the Association for Family Therapy's code of ethics for the practice and teaching of therapy.

## BRIEF TEAM MEMBERS

Evan George has worked in generic social services and in community mental health services for adults, children and families. He has taught widely in the fields of brief therapy, family therapy and child protection throughout Britain and abroad. He has published on brief therapy, child protection and consultation.

Chris Iveson has worked as a practitioner and manager in social service teams and in several NHS clinics serving both children and adults. He has published in many areas of brief therapy including mental health, work with children, older people and couples.

Harvey Ratner worked in the voluntary sector and social services area teams before joining a multidisciplinary health service clinic. He has published on health care counselling, drug and alcohol work, child protection and school counselling.

## COMMISSIONING ORGANISATIONS

Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools</li> <li>Psychology</li> <li>Special needs and learning support</li> <li>Heads and Year Heads</li> <li>Inclusion</li> <li>Counselling staff</li> <li>Education social work</li> </ul>
Social Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Managers</li> <li>Children and family teams</li> <li>Mental health teams</li> <li>Older persons' service teams</li> <li>Fostering and Adoption</li> <li>Prevention</li> <li>Family centres</li> <li>Child protection</li> </ul>
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General Practitioners</li> <li>Community mental health</li> <li>Child and adolescent psychiatry</li> <li>Mental health nursing</li> <li>Occupational therapy</li> <li>Staff counselling</li> <li>Primary health services</li> <li>Drug and alcohol services</li> </ul>
Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Probation</li> <li>Partnership projects</li> <li>Youth Offending Teams</li> <li>Managers</li> <li>Lawyers</li> <li>Police</li> </ul>
Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hostels and housing</li> <li>Employee assistance programmes</li> <li>Staff counselling</li> <li>Management consultancy</li> <li>Barnados, Children's Society and Action for Children</li> <li>Couple counseling services</li> <li>Day and residential projects</li> <li>Team building</li> <li>Connexions</li> </ul>

## FEEDBACK

The best course in years! (Social worker)

Clear, practical and useful course and enjoyable.  
(Educational psychologist)

It gave an optimistic framework for use in hopeless cases.  
(drug clinic worker)

Appreciated the pace at which ideas were allowed to be explored. Every person's idea was made to feel valued. It was a most interesting and unthreatening way to learn ideas and gain information. (teacher)

Very methodical and user-friendly. Emphasis placed on demystifying therapeutic practice. (RMN acute ward)

The relevance of this approach cannot be overstated. Instead of seeking to apply a patch to a tear on a suit, it's almost like being given a new suit. Very relevant indeed. (probation officer)

The ideas were presented with great clarity. The experiential process consolidated the teaching directly as did the video presentations. (teacher)

Safe group created as a result of the teacher's skill and ability. Most important to allow most to be got out of the course. (social worker)

Easy, clear interesting and relaxed presentation, as a result of which the days just seemed to fly by. (psychotherapist)

Very informative - answered all the questions I had and was inspiring with its creativity. (family therapist)

It has changed my entire practice. (GP)

Following the course our need to refer to child and family specialist services has reduced considerably (health visitor manager)

The great thing is I know I can go and use it tomorrow. (health visitor)

## **TEACHING ACCOMMODATION**

BRIEF is able to offer excellent course accommodation with two well-equipped teaching rooms, the largest taking up to 32 participants, 'break-out' rooms and common room.

For London-based organisations in particular this offers an attractive and, in many cases, more economical alternative to finding their own course accommodation.

BRIEF is close to the heart of the city with the widest range of catering available within a few minutes walk. We are very close to the Barbican Centre (for theatre, music, cinema and galleries), St Pauls Cathedral and also within walking distance of The Tate Modern, via the Millenium Bridge.

Pleas call or email us for more information.

**For further information or discussion about all your training requirements, and for details of our terms and conditions, please contact**

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