

**Building solutions**  
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**CONTRASTING VIEWS ABOUT DISCIPLINE**

**View of children**

Negative vs trusting

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**View of behavioural disruptions**

Naughty vs natural/inevitable

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Inappropriate vs an occasion for teaching

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**Causes of disruptive behaviours**

External consequences, vs attempts to meet needs and reactive behaviours

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**Goals of discipline**

Compliance vs considerateness

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**Locus of causality**

External vs internal

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**Adult's status**

Boss vs leader

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Power vs expertise

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Coercive vs protective force

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## SOLUTION BUILDING

### Principles

- Individuals have reasons for their behaviour
- People know more about themselves than outsiders ever will
- Problems signal that people are *stuck*, not sick
- All individuals, no matter how stuck, are doing something to prevent their problems deteriorating
- All environments, no matter how bleak, provide some resources to support them to do so
- The person is not the problem: *the problem is the problem*
- The problem is not the dancers; it's the dance

### Core principles

- 1 You have a choice: of looking for what is wrong and how to fix it, or searching for what is right and how to use it
- 2 No problem occurs all the time: there are always instances when it could have occurred but did not, or was less severe than usual. These instances are known as exceptions. They are the source of the solution.

### Steps

- Define the problem
- Map the problem's influence on those affected
- Identify participants' goals using the miracle question
- Map individuals' influence on the problem by asking about its exceptions
- Expand on exceptions, by suggesting tasks:
  - for deliberate exceptions, recommend more of same
  - for 'flukes' recommend experimenting
  - for those who feel powerless, ask what they do to prevent a deterioration
- Notice and highlight improvements:
  - E Elicit what has changed
  - A Amplify the changes
  - R Reinforce successes (with acknowledgment)
  - S Start again (if necessary)

### Follow-up discussion

- If no change, recommend people be more unpredictable
  - If improvement, use positive blame and recommend more of the same
  - If a deterioration, listen to despondency then ask what keeps things from getting worse
  - Warn about relapses
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**RESPONSES TO CHRONIC PROBLEMS**

- Check your preventive measures \_\_\_\_\_
- Start with an easier behaviour \_\_\_\_\_
- Reframe your explanation \_\_\_\_\_  
of the behaviour \_\_\_\_\_
- Interrupt the pattern \_\_\_\_\_
- Do the opposite of what you \_\_\_\_\_  
have been doing so far \_\_\_\_\_

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**The reframing steps**

- 1 Describe specifically what the child does.
- 2 Detail your present explanation for the behaviour and identify its theme:
  - the child cannot help him/herself
  - the child is 'misbehaving' deliberately
- 3 Detail how you usually respond. Recognise that your response arises from your explanation and that, given that the behaviour is persisting, this could mean that your explanation is not helping.
- 4 Generate an alternative explanation.
- 5 Act in a different way, as suggested by the new explanation

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**Pattern interruption (Durrant 1995)**

- change the location \_\_\_\_\_
- change who is involved \_\_\_\_\_
- change the sequence of the steps \_\_\_\_\_
- add a new element \_\_\_\_\_
- introduce random starting and stopping \_\_\_\_\_
- increase the frequency of the behaviour \_\_\_\_\_

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## COLLABORATING WITH PARENTS

When collaborating with parents to resolve their children's behavioural difficulties, you will need to respect that they will have been co-opted somewhat involuntarily into discussing this with you. While wanting the best for their child and thus being willing to be involved, they would prefer not to have the problem in the first place.

Solution-focused theory believes that when people have problems that undermine their functioning, they are more familiar with those problems than outsiders can ever be (Selekman 1997). They are the experts on how the problem affects their lives and, often unbeknownst to themselves, are the experts on how they can affect it. This belief that young people and their parents have the wisdom to solve their own problems not only respects them, but also relieves you of the responsibility of being the expert with all the answers.

Solution-focused theory believes that recurrent problems are not a sign of individual pathology, but merely signal that people are stuck (not sick) (Murphy 2006). The theory takes little interest in how people got stuck in the first place, but focuses instead on how solutions can be developed (Nichols & Schwartz 1995). As such, it has a future orientation, rather than an interest in the past (De Jong & Berg 2002; Molnar & de Shazer 1987; Murphy 1994). As its name implies, it also avoids a deficit perspective: your task is not to assess problems, but to listen out for parents' accounts and observe children's behaviours to identify what is working (Murphy 2006).

From this description, it is clear that the solution-focused approach fits neatly within a parent-driven model because its interventions are driven by those experiencing the problem, rather than by an outside adviser (Duncan et al. 2003).

### Four models of collaboration with parents

- *Professional-driven*: the doctor knows best
- *Parent-allied*: professionals and parents work in parallel
- *Family-centred*: services meet the needs of families as well as of children
- *Parent-driven*: parents employ professionals to help them raise skilled, well-adjusted children, they know their children best and know their aspirations for their children; therefore, parents are the ones to steer their children's education

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### Principles of collaboration with parents

Rather than allocating blame, four principles will inform your interactions with parents to resolve school- or centre-based difficulties.

1. This is a school- or centre-based problem and therefore *you* must be the one to solve it. Even if parents did instigate disciplinary or other measures at home, these would have little impact on their child's behaviour elsewhere.
2. Your purpose in informing parents of concerns about their child is not to have them punish their child at home. You would not punish a child at your centre or school for something that happened at home (e.g. not eating her vegetables). On the contrary, your purpose is to harness parents' expertise to suggest how you might solve it.

