

# **Solution Focused Therapy using the Miracle Question**

Try the Miracle Question Test: *Suppose you woke up one morning and by some miracle everything you ever wanted, everything good you could ever imagine for yourself, had actually happened - your life had turned out exactly the way you wanted it.*

**Think about it now.**

- What will you notice around you that let you know that the miracle had happened?
- What will you see?
- What will you hear?
- What will you feel inside yourself?
- How would you be different?

## **Solution focused brief therapy**

The essence of solution focused brief therapy is the client is the expert and it is the client's goals that are important. Solution focused brief therapy focuses on the solution the client wants, not the problem. Solution focused brief therapy focuses on what can be done, not what cannot be changed. Solution focused brief therapy is about here and now, not what happened in the past. Solution focused brief therapy is about what is possible, and whatever works, get done more. Solution focused brief therapy believes that current solutions are the problem, doing more of the same is wrong, that change, any change is success. The therapist's job is identify what can be changed and to change it.

## **Solution Focused Therapy**

Solution focused brief therapy aims to get the client to imagine change, to imagine the future. The Miracle Question is instant therapy. The Miracle Question focuses your mind on exactly how to achieve what you want. Focusing on your future goals is the essence of Solution Focused Therapy. Solution focused therapy ignores what is past, what has happened, the history of the problem. Solution focused therapy gets the client to focus on what they want to become and how they will get there. Solution focused therapy stops you thinking about past failures and makes you focus only on what you want to be. It takes people out of the problem situation and into the solution space.

The Miracle Question lets the client focus on his own solution, and come up with exactly what he wants, not what the therapist wants.

### **The key to success is knowing what you want.**

In fact, when asked, most people cannot answer the miracle question, except in very general terms. They have been so busy going over the past and how bad their present problems are, they have never really thought about what their ideal future would look like. They do not have a clear idea of what success would mean for them. They cannot visualize success. And because of that, they will never achieve it.

The Miracle question forces you to think about exactly what it is you want from life. Until you get a clear idea of what you want you will drift through life. You must know what you want first before you can have any chance of getting it. The miracle is that if you do know what you want, decide what you want, and visualize it clearly, that will start to motivate you, and you will achieve it.

The Miracle Question is your test of whether you are really serious about wanting success. Unless you can answer the question immediately with exact details of what your ideal outcome would be, you are not yet in a position to take charge of your life. The Miracle Question is the starting point for effective solution focused therapy.

## MIRACLE QUESTION EXERCISE

Do you know what you truly want? Try the Miracle Question now.

*Suppose tonight, while you are asleep, the miracle happens.*

*Because you were asleep you didn't know it had happened, but everything you ever wanted is not there. You now have your perfect life.*

*When you waken in the morning how will you be able to tell that the miracle has happened?*

*As an exercise, sit or lie down somewhere quiet where you won't be disturbed, and carry out the miracle exercise. Allow your breathing to slow, settle comfortably and let your mind wander where it will.*

*Ask yourself*

- '*After the miracle,*
- '*What will I see that is different?*',
- '*What will I hear that is different?*',
- '*What will I be that is different?*',
- '*What will I feel inside that is different from the way I feel now?*'

Think about those questions for a while, and then ask yourself 'What would the other people in my life see, hear, notice, that was different?' Think about each of the people in your life and see yourself after the miracle from their point of view, imagining what is going into their eyes and ears, what is going through their mind as they deal with the new you. Think about what they would think about your behavior, attitude, values in your new life. Think about how you would behave, knowing what they think and see, and what you would have to do to make them see you behaving that way. Spend about ten minutes or so doing the exercise.

Then resume your normal tasks, go through the rest of your day, and in every situation, as you get into that situation, imagine how you would behave if the miracle had happened, and then do as much of that behavior as you can.

The following day, think about how you acted when you assumed that miracle had happened, and how many things you actually did that were part of the miracle, and then imagine your life after the miracle in even more detail.

Repeat the Miracle question exercise every day until the miracle has happened. You will then be living the miracle.

## THE AS-IF EXERCISE THERAPY

**How to use the miracle question in solution focused therapy.**

1. Tomorrow morning, as soon as you get up, as soon as you are reminded of your problem in some way, repeat the miracle question, ask yourself
2. "*What would I be like if the miracle has happened, if I was magically rid of my problem?*". "*What would it be like if my problem had just vanished? What would I be doing? What could I do that I don't do now?*".
3. Then let something come to mind.
4. Probably several things will come to mind.
5. Choose the smallest, least significant thing that you would be doing if your problem had gone, that you don't already do.
6. Choose something definite, some act or behavior, something that could be measured or noticed, not just an attitude.

7. Then during the day, act 'as-if' your problem was gone.
8. Put the 'as-if' change into practice, actually do it, that small insignificant thing.
9. And all day keep doing it, and the next day choose something else, some other small insignificant thing, to do as well.
10. And keep doing those things 'as-if' you did not have the problem.
11. Add a new behaviour each day.
12. And a miracle will happen: you actually will not have the problem.

Acting 'as-if' frees you to not have the problem any more.

## The DARE QUESTION EXERCISE

How to use the Dare Question in solution focused therapy.

So how do you work out what you really want? The Dare Question may have an answer for you. Suppose somebody said you could have anything you wanted in the world, anything at all, how would you know what to choose?

One way is to ask yourself the Dare question:

**"What would you do if you knew you could not fail?"**

Most people in fact have never really thought about what they want, what they might be capable of, because they are so focused on the daily routine that they just don't take the time to think about their own future. And not knowing what you want is the route to a wasted life.

So, ask yourself the Dare question, and note what your answer is.

Think about what would happen if you actually succeeded at what your answer was. Most people doing this exercise find that they start off with some conventional answer almost automatically, but when they have had some time to actually absorb the idea of being unable to fail, come up with an entirely different, and sometimes surprising, answer. Your answer will tell you what you really want to achieve.

## The SHOULD QUESTION EXERCISE

**How to use the Should Question in solution focused therapy.**

Get a bit of paper and divide it into three columns. At the top the first column write the words 'I should....'.

Then in that column write down all the things that you feel you should be doing. The list can be as long or as short as you like. Look at your list and rearrange them into the most important. Then, beside each '**I should...**' statements, ask yourself '**Why?**' and write down the answer in the second column. Then for each Should statement ask yourself '**Says Who?**' and write the answer in the third column.

Doing this exercise will let you find the basic beliefs you have about yourself. The 'Says Who?' column will challenge your assumptions and will show how you have been programmed to believe certain things that are causing problems for you.

Now go through the list again, but this time **rewrite all statements in the form 'I COULD....'**. These will turn into your affirmations. These affirmations will targeted exactly at the things in you life that you need to focus on.

## **Assumptions of a Brief Solution Focused Therapy Approach**

### **Becoming Solution-Focused in Brief Therapy - John Walter & Jane Peller (1992)**

1. Focusing on the positive, on the solution, and on the future facilitates change in the desired direction. Therefore, focus on solution-oriented talk rather than on problem oriented talk.
2. Exceptions to every problem can be created by therapist and clients, which can be used to build solutions.
3. Change is occurring all the time.
4. Small changing leads to larger changing.
5. Clients are always cooperating. They are showing us how they think change takes place. As we understand their thinking and act accordingly, cooperation is inevitable.
6. People have all they need to solve their problems.
7. Meaning and experience are interactionally constructed.
8. Actions and descriptions are circular.
9. The meaning of the message is the response you receive.
10. Therapy is a goal or solution-focused endeavor, with the client as expert.
11. Any change in how clients describe a goal (solution) and/or what they do affects future interactions with all others involved.
12. The members in a treatment group are those who share a goal and state their desire to do something about making it happen.

### **Beyond Technique - Eve Lipchik (2002)**

1. Every client is unique.
2. Clients have the inherent strength and resources to help themselves.
3. Nothing is all negative.
4. There is no such thing as resistance.
5. You can not change clients; they can only change themselves.
6. SFT goes slowly.
7. There is no cause and effect.
8. Solutions do not necessarily have anything to do with the problem.
9. Emotions are part of every problem and every solution.
10. Change is constant and inevitable; a small change can lead to bigger changes.
11. One can't change the past so one should concentrate on the future.

### **The Solutions Focus - Jackson and McKergow (2002)**

1. Change is happening all the time. Our job is to identify and amplify useful change.
2. There is no one "right" way of looking at things: different views may fit the facts just as well.
3. Detailed understanding of the "problem" is usually of little help in arriving at the solution.
4. No "problem" happens all the time. The direct route lies in identifying what is going on when it does not happen.
5. Clues to the solution are right there in front of you: you just need to recognize them.
6. Small changes in the right direction can be amplified to great effect.
7. It is important to stay solution-focused, not solution-forced.

### **More than miracles - de Shazer, Dolan et al (2007)**

1. If it isn't broken, don't fix it.
2. If it works, do more of it.
3. If it's not working, do something different.
4. Small steps can lead to big changes.
5. The solutions is not necessarily directly related to the problem.
6. The language for solution-development is different from that needed to describe a problem.
7. No problem happens all the time; there are always exceptions that can be utilized.
8. The future is both created and negotiable.

### **Handbook of Solution-focused brief Therapy - Thorana Nelson and Frank Thomas (2007)**

1. Change is constant and inevitable; just as one cannot not communicate, one cannot not change.
2. If it ain't broke, don't fix it. Once you know what works, do more of it! If it doesn't work, then don't do it again-do something different!
3. Clients come to us with resources and strengths, both personal and contextual. Our job is to create a milieu in which these become important and are identified.
4. There is not necessarily a logical relationship between the problem and the solution. The therapist's role is not to diagnose and repair but to identify and amplify potential solutions.
5. A focus on the possible and changeable is more helpful than a focus on the overwhelming and intractable.
6. A small change can lead to bigger change.
7. Therapy is client-centered-the client is the expert on his or her experience.

### **My thoughts about Solution Focused Thinking & Work**

