BUILDING BRIDGES WITH
SOLUTION FOCUSED
CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

FREDRIKE BANNINK

Master of Dispute Resolution
Clinical psychologist
Mediator Court of Amsterdam

What we’ll do....

- ‘Sparkling moments’
- What is Solution Focus (SF)
- SF conflict management
- SF questions/role of SF mediator
- How to become a supermediator: Session Rating Scale
- Validation/homework

Sparkling moments

- In pairs, tell your partner about one of your personal ‘sparkling moments’ as a mediator in the past few weeks - a moment when you felt at your best
- How come? What was it that made the moment sparkle for you?
- Get as much detail as possible!
- Listen carefully to what your partner says - you’ll need that in a moment

Based on what your partner just said......

- Reflect on what you now know about their excellent qualities, skills and resources - think for a moment
- Then - tell them and wait for them to say ‘Thank you’

Giving compliments

Person with broadest smile starts
Suppose ....

Based on the discussion you’ve had so far....

Ask your partner what small step they might take to increase the prospect of more sparkling moments

What is Solution Focus?
A paradigm shift

• Goal-oriented approach
• Finding what works and do more of it
• Putting positive difference to work
• A proven, simple, effective approach to change

Applied to: psychotherapy, coaching, management, leadership, strategic planning, conflict management/mediation, education, sports, etc

Integrating with Problem focus: no. Combining with PF: yes

Research SF in psychotherapy

Compared to problem-focused psychotherapy, SF psychotherapy:
• is shorter: 3-4 sessions
• autonomy of clients is guaranteed (competence-based)
• works better for lower soc. econ. groups
• less burn-out amongst professionals!

Conflict management/mediation

• Fight (win-lose)
• Negotiate (compromise)
• Problem solve (identify the cause and remove it)

Fight, negotiation and problem solve are looking back at what is already there
Design is looking forward at what might be created

• Design an outcome (win-win)

De Bono: 'Third party comes in as a designer, not as a fetch-and-carry go-between’
**Shortcomings of problem solving paradigm**

Problem solving paradigm is useful:
- mechanical problems
- relative stable problems
- problems that are simply related

But not useful in a world of constant change and with complex problems

**Design an outcome**

- ‘With design there is a sense of purpose and a sense of fit. Problem analysis is always looking back at what is already there; design is always looking forward at what might be created. We need to design outcomes.
- I do not even like saying ‘solutions’ because this implies that there is a problem. Even when we cannot find a cause, or, after finding it, cannot remove it, we can always attempt to design an outcome’ (De Bono, 1985, p. 42)

**Design an outcome**

What would you like to have instead of the conflict?

Haynes, Haynes & Fong (2004), mediators:

‘Most clients are highly articulate about what they do not want and equally reticent about what they do want. However, the mediator is only useful to the clients in helping them to determine what they do want in the future and then helping them to decide how they can get what they want.

It is difficult for the mediator to help clients get what they do not want, which is what clients expect if the mediator dwells with them on the past’.

Walter & Peller (2000), SF psychotherapists:

‘Clients sometimes speak only of what they do not want or what they want to eliminate from their lives. In interactional situations, clients often speak of what they want the other person not to do. Their only course of action at that time has been to try to get the other person to stop doing what they consider to be problematic behavior.

The other person is also in a strange position, in that the options are either to defend the present behavior or to stop what the other finds so problematic. He/she is still in the dark as to what the client does want to happen. Sometimes, talking about what the client does want opens up the conversation in a more positive direction’
SF conflict management

• Where to? instead of where from?
• ‘I don’t know’......
• ‘Not the airport’.....

Direct route to change

• What are your best hopes from this?
• What will your life/relationship be like if these hopes are met?
• What is the least you would like to see happen?
• What are you already doing and what have you done in the past that might help these hopes become reality?
• What can yo do now as a first small step?

Scaling progress

10: Best hopes
X: Realistic aim
Y+1: Small signs of progress
Y: Present position (What have you done to reach this point? How did you do that? What does it say about you? Who would agree? What else have you done?)
0: Worst possible

Solution focused questions

1. What are your best hopes?
2. What difference will that make?
3. What is already working?
4. What will be a next sign of progress / what will be your next step?
More SF questions
from self, the other and detached position

1. When the conflict/issue will be resolved, what will you notice that is different about the other person? What else?
2. When the conflict/issue will be resolved, what will the other person notice that is different about you? What else?
3. When the conflict/issue will be resolved and you are being watched by an outside observer, what will this observer notice that is different about your relationship with the other person? What else?

More scales

- Pure collaboration- pure conflict (Schelling, 1960)
- Respect - contempt
- Progress, hope, motivation, confidence

SF Conflict Management

- Balance between acknowledgement and possibilities
- Use of past tense for conflict; use of future tense for preferred future
- Negative emotions: ‘Maori technique’ or: ‘How long do you need to talk about what is wrong before you are ready to talk about what you want to have instead’

Role of SF mediator

Water the flowers, not the weeds!
‘Conflict talk’ - ‘Solutions talk’

‘Conflict talk’
Focus on problems and conflict, what clients do not want, causes, negative emotions, disadvantages, deficits, failures and the feared future

Ergo: less positive emotions, less resilience, less flexibility, less creativity, less empathy

‘Solutions talk’
Focus on what clients want instead of problems and conflict, exceptions, positive emotions, advantages, strengths, successes, and the preferred future

Ergo: more positive emotions, more resilience, more flexibility, more creativity, more empathy

Homework for (more) happiness

Today and for the rest of the conference (and maybe the rest of your life?).....

Do 5 acts of kindness

Become a supermediator
Session Rating Scale, www.scottdmiller.com

Please rate today’s session by placing a mark on the line nearest to the description that best fits your experience (4 lines of 10 cm each)

------------------------------------------Relationship with mediator------------------------------------------
------------------------------------------Goals and topics------------------------------------------
------------------------------------------Approach or method------------------------------------------
------------------------------------------Overall------------------------------------------
Supermediator: ‘What can I do differently/better next time?’
Research psychotherapy: twice as likely to achieve clinically significant change!

www.mediate.com

• Solution Focused Mediation (2008)
• Visitor, Complainant, Customer: Motivating Clients To Change In Mediation (2008)
• Building Positive Emotions In Mediation (2009)
• Supermediators (2009)
• Changing conflict stories (2010)
• Successful scaling in mediation (2010)
• Mediation and Game Theory (2012)
Thank you for your kind attention

www.fredrikebannink.com