

SSFN

Scottish Solution Focused Network

Newsletter No. 6.

In this edition we have reports from both the [February training day](#) and the [training day in May](#), where we played host to our colleagues from Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, Texas. We also have an update on SSFN member Claudia Van Zuiden's work supporting health and social care professionals in the aftermath of the [Nepal earthquake](#). There is also feedback from our [2014 Review](#), and news of [SolutionFest 2015](#). Finally, we have an updated [Network List](#) of members.

February Training Day

The SSFN Training Day in February took place at the Playfield Institute and, although there was only a small turnout, there was plenty of discussion and sharing of ideas. The day began, as it often does, with a sharing of what has been going well for participants recently. Steve reported that the mental health clinic Mental Health Solutions at RGU: Wellness was now operational and the first clients had been seen. This is a milestone event in terms of RGU's support and development of Solution Focused practice, and an important step in making Solution Focused Interactions more widely available in the North East. Graham reported that he had sent two senior staff members onto the RGU training course, which had recently started, and they were really enjoying the experience. These staff were intended to become SF Champions, he said, and would be key figures in developing a new work-stream around Solution Focused Recovery. Graham had recently had a very interesting discussion with the Minister for Health regarding the differences between 'brief interventions' and 'psychological therapies', with general agreement that the former offered a rich potential for positive clinical outcomes and reduction in patient waiting times. Claudia spoke about her on-going work in Business Coaching and noted that the distinction between business goals and personal goals that clients brought to sessions was increasingly blurred; that very often solutions to business related problems were discovered through personal change, a realisation that often surprised clients. She also spoke about Solution Ways impending move from Kincardine O'Neil (where she had hosted the previous Training Day) to new premises in Torphins. There was also a wide ranging discussion about future SSFN activity with Terre des Hommes Schweiz, an international organisation that supports young people; more on this to follow.

The *Informal Interview with an Experienced Practitioner* was with Graham Buchanan. Graham spoke about his early training, in the early 1990's, as a Family Therapist in Northumbria University and of

reading Steve de Shazer's *Keys to Solution in Brief Therapy*. He described having an increasing sense of discomfort with Family Therapy, with "trying to analyse and fix other people's problems, using techniques like paradox and reframing", and of meeting John Wheeler at a presentation John gave; "and from then on I was a *Solution Focused* therapist". Asked how he would describe his use of Solution Focus now, he responded that it is "pervasive in my life ... it's always been about 'illuminating the potential', that's always been my ambition, and through nursing I've been able to do that, and continue to do that, with Solution Focused working." Following lunch we went on to discuss the 'expert role', and the sharing of that position, in solution focused interactions. There was also a preliminary discussion around this year's Conference ... but more about that later.

May Training Day

The May training day departed from our usual format in that we were pleased to welcome our four guests from Texas. [Dr Marcella Stark](#) and her three Doctoral students (Brenda, Olivia and Vanden) are Counsellors, practicing in the Fort Worth area of Texas. They were on a Study Abroad class, taking in London, Cambridge, Cardiff and Edinburgh. The day began with a discussion around counselling practice in the UK, and especially in Scotland. It emerged that the *Counsellor* role in the US has a greater professional identity associated with it than it does in Scotland, and we went on to discuss the various professional disciplines who provide counselling / therapy in the Scottish context. Following lunch, kindly provided by the Playfield Institute, a number of SSFN members joined the group. Steve provided an overview of his research on the experience of nurses training in SFBT, and this acted as a catalyst for a wider discussion on our shared experiences. Following the meeting, Marcell, Brenda, Olivia and Vanden enjoyed a visit to St Andrews, taking in some of the sights before, very kindly, providing supper to their guides, Graham and Steve. The group then returned to Cupar railway station with two minutes to spare before the train to Edinburgh left.



Marcella has since been back in touch with us to tell us of a research project she is involved with, along with Johnny Kim and Peter Lehman, both well-known and well respected practitioners and academics. Her request is for those of us who have completed a short-term training course in SF interactions; unfortunately, this means that those of us who have completed the 150 hour RGU course won't be eligible, but those of us who have completed a two-day workshop in the past two years will be eligible for the study. Dr Stark wrote:

“Dear Care Provider,

We are writing to ask for your participation in a research study on best practices in training care providers in the solution-focused approach to counseling. Specifically, we want to identify training content and practices that have been most beneficial in your learning of the solution-focused approach, as well as in the continued, correct use of the approach (as identified by high scores on a fidelity instrument). The information gained will be helpful to trainers as they design and provide solution-focused training programs. It is our hope that trainers doing more of what works in their training will result in more confident and competent solution-focused care providers. Participation should take approximately 30-40 minutes and requires your completion of a demographic questionnaire and feedback survey. Those participants who complete the survey will receive a \$20 Amazon gift card as a thank you for their time and participation.

If you would like to participate, please contact the researchers at SFtrainingresearch@gmail.com.

Respectfully,

Marcella Stark, Ph.D., LPC-S, Johnny Kim, Ph.D., LICSW, Peter Lehmann, Ph.D., LCSW.”

We would encourage as many SSFN members who are eligible to participate in the study.

Nepal work

As far back as SolutionFest 2013, the SSFN agreed to support Claudia Van Zuiden’s work in helping to take SFBT to developing parts of the world, and in particular Nepal. Originally conceived as ‘Solutions Without Borders’, Claudia has developed her work, networking with a host of other practitioners and providers around the world. Following the April 25th earthquake in Nepal, Claudia set about raising funds to provide funding for some of the most immediate ‘solutions’ required in Nepal. The [Nepal Earthquake Relief Fund](#), Scotland has so far raised £2,469 of a planned £3,000, directing money to known associates in Nepal who then direct the money directly to two hospitals in Pokhara, and to supply tents through the GlobalMentalHealth project. Claudia herself has gone to



Nepal and has been providing training in SF interactions to those people who are working with the survivors of the earthquake. The Nepalese Psychology Network announced on June 3rd, “We are organizing Post-traumatic Recovery workshop in the Solution Focused Approach. This is a 'Training the Trainer in Solution Focused Supervision' workshop. This workshop will focus upon on how to help supporters (i.e. community psychosocial workers, counselors, social workers, therapists, psychologists,

volunteers, etc.) who are helping survivors of trauma, to maintain and to support their own mental health and well-being while being involved in caregiving work.” Claudia noted (through her facebook

page) the next day, “Such a wonderful day...I am so touched by listening to people's stories of how they get healing for themselves by supporting others. It again made me realise again how strong Nepalese people are and how incredibly caring they are.” Further information is available from Claudia’s [blog](#).

2014 Review

At the end of 2014 we asked SSFN members to tell us what they thought of how we were doing; what we were doing well, and what would make the SSFN even better. Overall, members scaled the SSFN at ‘7’ on a scale of ‘0’ to ‘10’. Things that would let members know we had moved one point up that scale included more people attending Training Days and greater online activity. In response to the question ‘what did the SSFN do well in 2014?’ the overwhelming answer was the National Conference held at the end of August 2014. Suggestions for what we could do better this year included streaming Training Days online (sounds like a job for Tom), promoting SF as a way for working with vulnerable people, and most emphatically, holding another national event. In light of the strong support the Conference received last year, we are looking towards another event this year and next; see below.

SolutionFest 2015

Given the positive feedback last year’s conference received, and the excellent support it received on the day, we are committed to hosting another SSFN conference soon. Discussion has centred on the issue of ‘when’, not ‘if’, and we have decided to take a bi-annual approach. As mentioned above, 2013 saw SolutionFest; a more informal Training Day with a networking element and a ‘pot-luck’ barbeque. We have decided to repeat SolutionFest this year, holding the event, again, in Steve’s garden in Edzell, on August 28th. Details will be sent out to members shortly, but will include a training presentation, possibly a video presentation, a skills based exercise, and, of course, the barbeque.

This will then allow us around 15 months to organise our Second National Conference in August 2016. Call for Papers will follow in September, and if anyone has anyone in mind who they think would make an excellent keynote speaker, let us know. We would hope to have details of the conference ready by early 2016. More news to follow.

Network List.

The strength of the SSFN lies in the fact that we are a network, that we can communicate with each other and share thoughts and experiences of working in SF interactions, of whatever type. The updated network list is below.

Name	Location
[Redacted Content]	



If there is anything you would like to see in the next Newsletter, get in contact with us, or let us know at the next SSFN Training Day.