



Top Tips for Staying Solution-Focused

Solution-focused support

Solution-focused support is about building confidence and believing that everyone can make positive changes in their lives. Breaking down goals into small steps helps to make change realistic and achievable. The focus is on looking for future solutions rather than looking into past problems.

With solution-focused support:

- parents identify their own goals and realistic steps to reach them
- parents identify their personal strengths rather than dwelling on challenges
- parents identify skills and solutions they have used before, in similar situations, which they could draw on again

Why offer solution-focused support?

Evidence shows that taking a partnership approach and focusing on parents' strengths and ability to find their own solutions is an effective way to support behaviour change. Advances in neuro-science have shown that when we focus on and talk about future actions, our neural pathways start to change in readiness.

How to offer support

If you are not accustomed to this approach, it can be hard to get used to supporting parents to look for their own solutions rather than offering advice or exploring past problems. It is useful if you can find a chance to practise offering solution-focused support with a **scaling ladder** in front of you. The table below might be useful to show a comparison between a problem-focused and a solution-focused approach.

Problem-focused	Solution-focused
Could you tell me about the problem?	What would you like to change?
Is this a problem you have always had?	How would you like the future to look?
How can I help you?	What are your best hopes for this session today?
How have you been since the last session?	What has improved since the last session?
What could you change about this difficulty?	What will it look like when things improve? How will you feel?
Do you feel things aren't getting much better yet?	What have you been doing to stop things getting worse?
How are you coping?	When you have faced this kind of problem before, what steps have you taken to resolve it?
Has this session helped?	What will you take away from today?

If you're not sure how to respond to a difficulty someone has raised, remember to use your skills of ESP – Empathy, Strengths, Paraphrasing:

- **Empathy** – Tuning in to someone else's feelings, understanding their point of view
- **Strengths** – Looking for strengths rather than weaknesses
- **Paraphrasing** – Feeding back what someone has said to show you understand their point of view

Using ESP will help parents feel understood, empowered and ready to change.