

It is no longer possible to imagine (mental) health care without a competency-focused approach. With this the focus is not (only) on what is wrong with patients, their diseases and disorders and how these can be mended, but first and foremost on their strengths and what works in their lives, and how they can build on that. An example is the concept of positive health as developed by Huber et al. (2011) and Huber, Van Vliet and Boers (2016): “Health as the ability to adapt and self-manage in light of the physical, emotional and social challenges of life.” This description makes health a dynamic concept, a power or ability.

A good example of such a competency-focused approach is the *solution-focused model*, where problems are not solved, but solutions are built instead. Meanwhile, many books on the solution-focused approach have been published, but this is the first book worldwide that discusses the way the solution-focused model is implemented in general practice.

The role of practitioners changes accordingly: they are no longer the only experts who make the diagnosis and give advice, but they see their patients as co-experts of their own lives. Research shows that a solution-focused approach is less time consuming than a problem-focused approach - and is therefore more cost-effective - and there is less burn-out among practitioners (Franklin et al., 2012, Medina & Beyebach, 2014).

In general practice the regular medical model is used. One finds out what exactly is the problem to be able to make the diagnosis before treatment is started. In our Western way of thinking, this cause-and-effect model is the framework par excellence to make the world understandable. This model is useful when it comes to relatively simple problems, which can be reduced to simple and unambiguous causes. The medical model consists of:

Examination > diagnosis > prescribed treatment = symptom reduction

However, when it comes to counseling or psychotherapy, this model has a major disadvantage, as it is strongly problem-focused. When the problem and its causes are analyzed, a vicious circle may arise with ever-growing problems. The atmosphere becomes fraught with problems, creating the risk that the solution gets increasingly out of sight and the hope for improvement decreases.

In general practice the solution-focused model is indicated in:

- assessing physical complaints and the preferred future of the patient (what is the goal of the patient, when are the complaints less (exceptions to the problem), and how does the patient contribute to this?);
- guidance of patients with psychosomatic complaints, pain, addictions, and psychological disorders such as depression, anxiety, psychotrauma, and sleep disorders;
- counseling of patients with somatic symptom disorder (helping to bear the effects, finding a different meaning, and possibly improvement);
- (better) managing of diseases or disabilities (what possibilities are left);
- when behavioral change is desirable or necessary (sticking to a regimen, medication adherence);
- medication contacts;

- aspects of healthy behavior, lifestyle and health promotion;
- parenting problems;
- dilemmas or conflicts;
- (peer) supervision;
- coaching individuals and teams;
- leadership;
- starting a solution-focused organization.

Solution-focused questions lie at the heart of the solution-focused approach. They invite patients to think differently, to notice positive differences, and to help make desired changes. Solution-focused questions can be about goal formulation, exceptions to the problem, and about the competencies of patients. Scaling questions are used to make complex matters simple, to determine the goal of the treatment, to find out what works and to define progress.

Why this book may also be interesting for you:

- The solution-focused model fits in well with the trend towards working in a competency-focused way, also in general practice.
- The book provides an extensive description of the solution-focused model.
- The focus is on what works in patients' lives.
- The focus is on the preferred future and which steps patients have already taken and can take further to achieve their goal.
- Solution-focused questions generate hope and a positive expectation. These positive emotions generate intrinsic motivation.
- Solution-focused conversations are often shorter and the number of conversations is often less. This makes the solution-focused model more cost-effective.
- Collaboration with patients is optimized, allowing the best in patients (and their practitioners) to emerge.
- Solution-focused conversations are lighter in tone: there is less burn-out among practitioners.
- A solution-focused approach also plays a part in working with teams, meetings, coaching and management, and in (peer) supervision.
- Both patients and practitioners describe their experiences with the solution-focused approach.
- A chapter with frequently asked questions (FAQ) helps you find answers to difficult situations.

This book is not only written for practitioners who work in general practice, but also for all other practitioners working in primary, secondary or tertiary care. The many benefits for the readers consist of the theory, the many solution-focused questions, applications, cases and stories.

They serve to help patients achieve their preferred future and to optimize collaboration between practitioners and patients or colleagues. Patients determine the goal or treatment and how they can achieve this.

Results from research presented by us should not be seen as a blueprint on how to act, but as examples, good ideas, options and inspiration for a successful process. Do not expect any guidelines, but look for a different, more positive vision on health care.

The time is right for a book like *Positive Health Care. The solution-focused model in general practice*. The book shows that working in general practice can often be better, shorter and also lighter and more fun.

This book lists a number of videos about the solution-focused approach. You can also view these at www.positievegezondheidszorg.nl or www.positivehealthcare.eu.

We hope you will enjoy this book and the solution-focused approach. We invite you to send your comments and suggestions to info@positivehealthcare.eu or www.positivehealthcare.eu.

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