



# What Is a Solution-Focused Crisis Intervention?

A solution-focused approach to crisis intervention is based on solution-focused brief therapy and can be used in time-sensitive, crisis situations.

## The approach focuses on:

- Identifying solutions to problems and concerns
- Identifying existing strengths and resources
- Tackling problems in the here and now
- Shifting thinking toward a more solution-oriented, positive outlook

## When using the approach:

- Take the attitude that positive changes are always possible.
- Help explore solutions and how to use personal resources to solve the problem.
- Encourage using current effective behaviors.
- Focus on the person's:
  - Wellbeing, not the problem
  - Strengths, not their weaknesses
  - Skills, resources, and coping abilities that can help to reach future goals

## Types of solution-focused questions:

**Note:** These question types may not be applicable or appropriate in every situation. For example, if someone is grieving a traumatic loss, miracle questions may trigger their trauma and escalate the crisis. Coping questions may be the most universally applicable, as they explicitly recognize an individual's self-care assets, evidence of resiliency, and other strengths related to survival.



**Miracle questions** ask the client to make a leap of faith and envision how their life will improve when the issue is resolved. For example:

- “Suppose that while you are sleeping tonight a miracle happens and the problem that brought you here is solved. However, because you are sleeping, you don't know that the miracle has happened. When you wake up tomorrow morning, what will be different that will tell you that the problem that brought you here has been solved?”



**Coping questions** invite the client to reflect on their own resiliency—helping them to see what works and allowing them to grow from a place of strength. For example:

- “How have you managed so far?”
- “What is working?”
- “Are there faith traditions or practices from your culture that help ground you or help you stay connected to who you are and where you come from?”





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**Exception questions** give the client the ability to recognize times when circumstances were different for them. For example:

- “Tell me about the times you have been feeling the happiest.”
- “What are some things—big or small—that bring you joy?”
- “When was the last time you felt like you had a better day? What were the good things that happened that day?”



**Scaling questions** allow the client to see their issues on a scale. For example:

- “On a scale of one to ten, with one being the worst this issue has ever been, and ten being the best things will be, where would you rank things today?”
- A follow-up question could be, “Thank you for sharing what has been going on and how that has you at a three. Can you think of anything, or can we brainstorm together, what we can do to bring you up to a four?”

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