Community Educational Psychology Service

Educational Psychologists work with others using our knowledge of psychology to promote positive change and well-being for children, young people and families in Suffolk
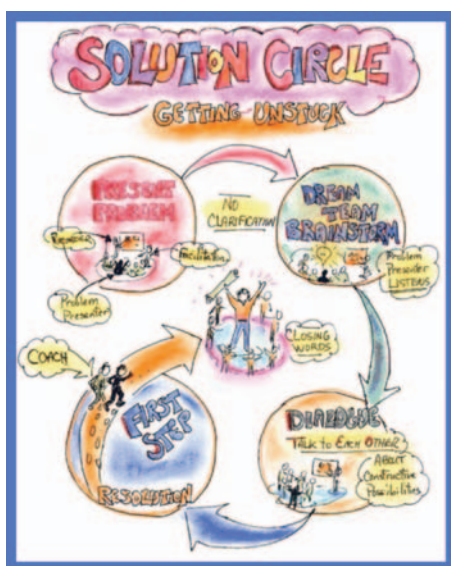
Suffolk County Council

Solution Circle

Solution Circle Fast and effective. A tool for getting unstuck in less than 30 minutes

This is an example of an outcome-focused process that can be used within group peer supervision.

Solution Circle is a tool to build "community capacity". **It is a short and powerful tool that is effective in getting a person or team "unstuck"** from a problem in life or work.

It assumes and demonstrates that nearby people – in any community or work place have the capacity to help if asked.

You can see the steps outlined on the following YouTube clip: **www.youtube.com/watch?v=QCnZVIgHKPc**

It requires a person to present their 'stuck issue' to a problem solving group and be willing to listen and have dialogue around the group's ideas. When this works well the problem presenter will have 2 or 3 ideas to move forward with by the end of the 30-minute Solution Circle session.

Ref: *Designed by Marsha Forest & Jack Pearpoint. Inclusion Press.*

Additional information can be found at:

### www.inclusive-solutions.com/problemsolving.asp#solutioncircle

Why Graphics?

Visual learning and attention are both activated during this process. Sometimes spoken words may fade and be forgotten whereas the picture on the wall serves as a reminder of things that have been said at the beginning of the process and this helps people hold those things in their mind throughout the session.

Graphics can show complexity and connections very effectively and colour can be used to reflect a range of emotions.

This way of recording things said, feelings etc. is a very effective way of recording everyone's comments and thoughts in a meaningful way.

It also helps people to build on their own and each others ideas. You can come back to things mentioned previously and they are not lost during the session.
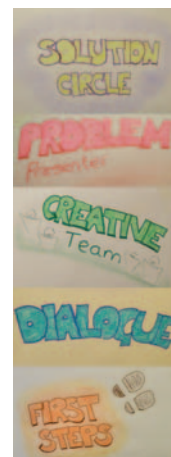
Solution Circle

Explain the steps to the team in detail:

Step One: Problem Presenter (Six minutes)

The problem presenter (focus person) will have six uninterrupted minutes to outline the problem. The job of the process facilitator is to keep time and make sure no one interrupts. The recorder takes notes. Everyone else (the creative team) listens. If the problem presenter stops talking before the six minutes elapse, everyone else stays silent until the six minutes pass. This is key! The problem presenter gets six uninterrupted minutes.

Step Two: Creative Team (Six minutes)

This is a 'brainstorm'. Everyone chimes in with ideas about creative solutions to what they just heard. Anything that you think may be a way forward.

It is not a time to clarify the problem or to ask questions. It is not a time to give speeches, lectures or advice. The process facilitator must make sure this is a brainstorm. Everyone gets a chance to give their brilliant ideas. No one must be allowed to dominate. The problem presenter listens — without interrupting. He/she must not talk or respond.

Step Three: Dialogue (Six minutes)

Problem presenter chooses 2 or 3 of the ideas mentioned in step 2. Ideas that they would like to hear a bit more about.

The group can have a dialogue led by the problem presenter.

This is time to explore and clarify the problem. Focus on the positive points only and not what can't be done.

Step Four: First Steps (Six minutes)

'The First Step'. The problem presenter (focus person) and the group decide on first steps that can be achieved within the next three days. At least ONE step should be initiated within 24 hours. This is critical. Research shows that unless a first step is taken almost immediately, people do not get out of their ruts. A coach from the group volunteers to phone or see the person within three days and check if they took their first step. Finally the group just does a round of words to describe the experience and the recorder gives the record to the focus person. If in a large group, the teams return to the main group, debrief and continue.