

EBTA 2014 - LEEWARDEN



**WORKSHOP
BY TOMASZ SWITEK**

„IN SEARCH FOR A NEW MEANINGS...”

„PROBLEMS—SOLUTIONS— JUST SITUATIONS”

Short part of the article about Situations Focused Model which will be published

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,The main idea of the *situations*-focused model is to leave behind the labeling of situations or conversations as either being a problem *or* a solution. The idea is to then leave the problem versus solution dichotomy and to move toward using the more neutral term *situation(s)*.

The situation focused model define the term *situation* as the status of the circumstances, factors, or the combination of circumstances at a specific point (present) or unspecific point (preferred or data) in time, which contains components and it's understandings. In other words the way something is positioned and connected with its surroundings. This definition of “situation” is based on the definition in American Heritage Dictionary. Neutral description means also attempt to consider all aspects, as possibly containing it's pluses and minuses, advantages and disadvantages.

I do not use the problems versus solutions dichotomy any more and instead I use the concept of situations which seemed to be much more neutral (neutral - means allowing to consider so called pluses and minuses, so it means that it's not defined by devinition „ok or not ok”, it just „is” with variety of possible meanings and validations) and thereby useful in offering a alternative to talking about solutions and problems. From my perspective the word *situation* had a much closer connection to the possibility for reflection around questions such as: *What was? What is? What will be?* I found it important to be able to pose this question in a *non-evaluative way*, to allow all or a at least a lot of aspects of the so-called pluses and minuses of a situation to be possible to be talked about in the therapeutic conversation, and to be free from a some what compulsive habit of changing the client's perspectives and perceptions to fit a solution-focused perspective. This idea of considering things from different perspectives and contexts showed very well, that the same "something" can be useful and not useful at the same time. Useful in one context of life (eg. family) and not useful in different context of life (eg. work) Then, it's much easier to grasp that the figure (it's pluses and it's minuses) depends on the chosen background. Defining something as problem-focused or as a solution-building may then be considered in a more flexible way depending on context, and the meaning of the situation can simultaneously contain pluses and minuses. I do propose that this stance is also present in the solution-focused model, but I do propose that it has not been defined and described as much and it is in this context I hope the solutions focused model can provide a mind map for practitioners to navigate.

The use of neutral, non evaluative, descriptions

The concept of situations makes it possible to use mostly neutral descriptions and to only use evaluative descriptions when helpful. This makes it possible to start using the terms *problems* and *solutions* in a complementary way, as possible options to describe the same things, since *the same situation can be perceived as a problem and solution at the same time*. In my current practice, I think in terms of pluses and minuses more than I think in terms of problems and solutions. I also like to use the term “preferred *situation*” instead of “preferred *future*”, because a preferred *situation* seems much nearer in time than a preferred *future*, which seems further away in the more distant idea of the *future*. Changing „preferred future” into „preferred situation” excluded direct connection between change and time, change stopped to be function of time and placed change somewhere beyond the line of time. Thus it can be somewhere in time, even almost now or now.

In a conversation, all situations can be described in a *neutral way* by asking questions, with questions like:

- How is it? What is going on? How do you react? What is going on in your mind?
- Tell me more about your (past, present, preferred life situation . . .
- How would your partner describe the situation?
- What’s going on around you?
- I would like to hear more about your relationship with . . .
- What do you think about . . . ?
- Can you say something about yourself and your work?
- As a therapist, I see your situation in this way . . .

Additionally, all situations can be described also using *evaluative questions* when defining some of the minuses or pluses. The below questions are constructed to talk about a present situation. I do not propose that one way of asking is more solution-focused than the other alternative below. I do not consider one being problem focused or solution-focused a priori:

- What worries/makes you somehow happy in your situation?
- What is difficult/okay for you in your children’s reaction(s)?
- Tell me more about the troubles/advantages you’re facing in this situation?
- What is hard/easy to accept about your workplace?
- Which of your reactions is/are not useful to you/your family?
- What don’t//do they like in your attitude?
- Please describe your deficits/resources as a . . . a bit more . . . „

PERSPECTIVE'S AIKIDO by Tomasz Świtek

The idea of eusemie (creating a good meanings) described by Luc Isebaert in the book "Pour une therapie breve" was the inspiration for creating that aikido circle, which allows us to work with ourselves our workers, partners and look for useful meanings, which could enhance efficiency of cooperation and actions.

We assume that very often we express our present perceptions about something (not always very useful for our actions within company) and that perceptions are not the only ones which exists in our "inner universe". Anyway perceptions expressed by us in present moments are the strongest and poses client's main focus and energy. Other perceptions about "that something" are in the present moment weaker and with lower energy level. It means that sometimes we need to accept and receive first perceptions with its energy and then look for other ones. By doing so we want to create context in which we can experience, that inside us live much more perceptions about "that something" than the strongest one. By eliciting and reinforcing other perceptions we can consider which one of that perceptions about that something is useful and desired by in particular moments, which one of them serves well for our efficiency, team cooperation and so on.

You can look for the alternative perceptions according every aspect of the client's world which requires some cognitive activity and creation of the meanings associated with that aspect.

It means that you talk with yourself or with someone about that person's perceptions about very different aspects from past, presence and future: situations, problems, life facts, persons and so on.

Imagine that you talk with client about her/his meanings about something. You ask questions "What's your meaning of it? What does it mean to you?" and someone share with your with her/his first choice meanings. You came to conclusion that such meanings is not necessary very useful and you decided to look for other meanings which can be created according to considered issue. In such a moment you start to use aikido perspective circle.

Please take a look at the circle presented below and imagine that you place into the central point chosen aspect of someone's reality. By doing so you prepare context in which you can move clients point of view toward very different filters which are: emotions, relationship, other's, context, physical conditions, knowledge, time, values. You ask specific questions which encourage client to create or elicit perceptions through chosen filter.

EXAMPLES OF THE QUESTIONS

EMOTIONS - consider coexistence of different feelings and different perceptions

What do you think about that issue when you feel anger/peace/fear/stress?

How do you perceive it when you're happy/disappointed?

What thoughts around that matter appears when you're depressed?

RELATIONSHIP - consider perception's change through different kinds of relationship

What would you think about that, if it would be done by your friend (not worker)?

How would you find it, if it would be expressed by your master (not work partner)?

What would be your perception, if it would be experienced by someone you like (not someone you dislike)?

OTHER'S - explore other's perceptions

What's your close work partner opinion on that matter?

How do they understand that situation?

In what way does your team member understand that words?

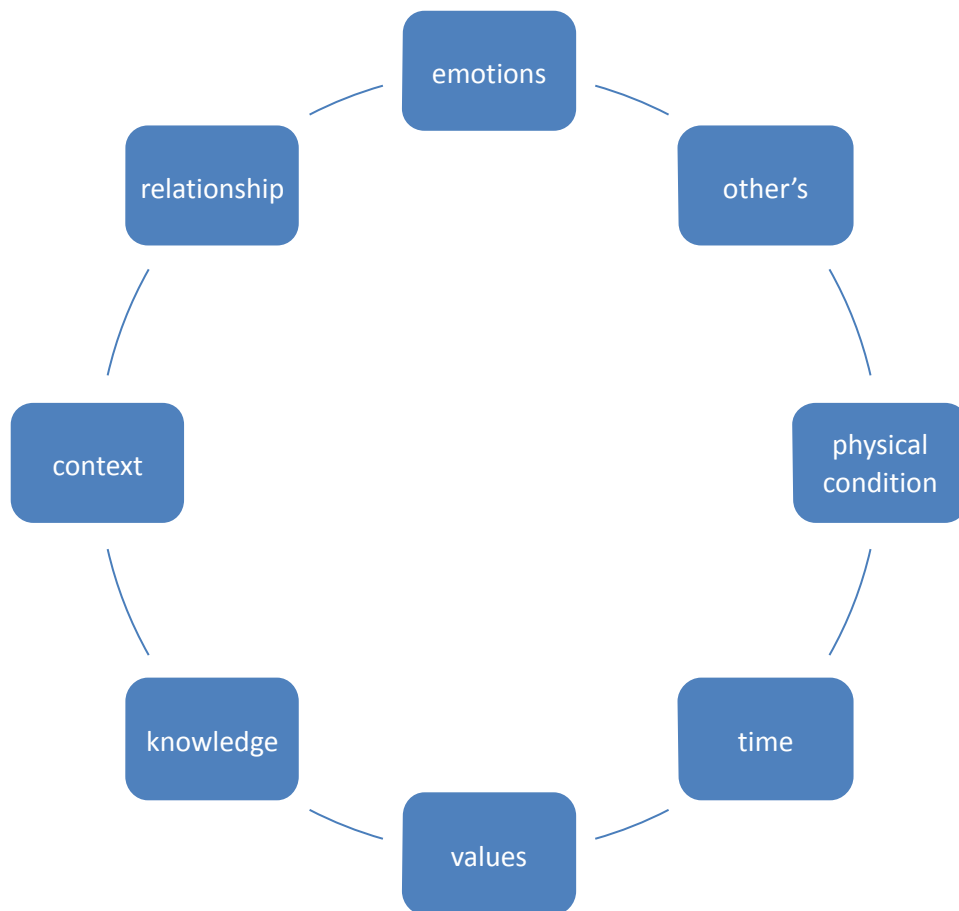
KNOWLEDGE - use some kind of knowledge as a factor for change perspective

How can you think about your worker, when you do remember that he's experiencing family troubles?

What does it mean to you, when you realize that it may be connected with stress?

Knowing that it's the matter of hormones, how can you think about your boss behaviors?

How can you treat such attitude, when you remember about specifics of the team processes?



TIME - elicit perception's change through flowing time

How did you thought about the same issue - one year ago/in the past?

When was it last time you thought about it differently?

How will you be able to see it in the future?

VALUES - take a look on some issues by incorporating values factor

How would you think about him remembering about respect/yours dignity/honesty?

What would be your interpretation of her behaviors through efficiency perspective?

How will it look like when we take into considerations company culture rules?

Above I wrote some of the possible questions you can create and use during conversation with clients to look for more of her/his meanings. Wish you good luck, hoping that you'll find it useful



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