

CANADIAN SFBT NEWSLETTER

HAPPY NEW YEAR

Happy New Year. We certainly hope that, in true SFBT fashion, you have taken the time to look at your goals, scaled how far you've

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moved towards them in 2015 and then checked out the differences this has made for you. Remember to compliment yourself for who you are in this process. We are excited to be able to reflect on our goals and create new ones as well. One of our goals was to be more intentional with our connection to Solution Focused Coaching. SF coaching and therapy have so many similar features; I suppose this is the case because goals and hopes are connected to being in relationships whether they are at the corporate or personal level. We feel so fortunate to have a wonderful

connection with Haesun Moon, director of the Solution-Focused Coaching Certificate (Continuing Ed), School of Social Work, University of Toronto. Haesun is a Solution-Focused Powerhouse!!! She is busy writing a book to be released in 2016: "Solution Focused Dialogue A to Z: Extraordinary Use of Ordinary Words", we are looking forward to that! Haesun is also organizing a not to be missed Symposium this May 12th to 15th, 2016 in Toronto with Ben Furman and we are absolutely delighted to feature her wisdoms in this newsletter.

Another goal we have is to continue training SFBT and also develop the training even further. We continue to be connected with the U of T Continuing Education SFBT certificate program. And, we are having some wonderful conversations with people interested in SFBT; especially around single sessions and walk-ins. This is becoming a very exciting venture. If you are interested in training (agencies, hospitals, groups or individually), feel free to contact us. Stay tuned.

We can be reached at:
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INTERVIEW WITH HAESUN MOON

Solution-Focused Coaching

1. **Haesun can you tell us a little bit about yourself? I know you are the Director of the SFT Coaching Certificate Program (continuing ed., Factor-Inwentash school of social work, UofT) and you also work full-time, but I also hear about ‘Brief’ and your travels to China. Wow! You are one busy SFT person!! Can you fill us in?**

Sure! Where do we start? I am at Sunnybrook (hospital) right now in the Organizational Development and Leadership Department. It’s one of those rare workplaces where you get to play in your preferred area with all the blessings from your leaders and team members. And of course the program directing role at the solution-focused brief coaching program at UofT.

The “brief” part, I suppose you refer to the brief in solution focused “brief” coaching? Well, I am more intentional about putting “brief” back in the name these days. Not that it is my goal to be brief in sessions, but in fact it becomes “brief” if the session is solution-focused, it is a healthy by-product of an effective approach. It’s a light word with a profound meaning to me – it assumes the lightness of my involvement in the

client’s life, it also assumes clients’ existing progress, and of course it means ethics and mastery of a coaching professional.

My travels to China started with one passionate student in the coaching program being asked the Miracle Question. Her miracle was to bring Solution Focused to China to change their society one dialogue at a time, and coupled with her determination and tremendous passion, she was able to make that miracle come true! She brought the Solution Focused Brief Coaching to a mainstream higher education, corporate sector, healthcare sector and education all within last 18 months. What does that mean? That means I am going back to China 3–4 times a year to help build solution focused communities so that they can continue to refine and elaborate solution focused practice in their own local contexts. We completed one cohort of professionals in December last year, the second cohort of coaches graduating this December, and we already have the third cohort in the process of becoming solution focused coaches. It’s humbling to see such well-educated and passionate

folks from diverse backgrounds coming together to learn solution-focused, and I feel that my work is almost like waking up a gentle quiet giant.

2. There is a beautiful and very funny story of how you discovered Solution-Focus, can you recount it for our readers?

It was the first class of some organization development class I enrolled in during my masters. I was sitting there with 20 other people in class, and I fell in love with what the professor was talking about – building rapport with people, clarifying what's wanted, and designing forward steps – yet I was a bit perplexed that the professor didn't talk about organizational development. He made a lot of reference to some therapy settings and clients and so on. During the first break I approached him and here's what the conversation sounded like this:

Me: "I love this! Will you talk about how this relates to OD?"

Prof: (looking at me confused) "... we don't talk about OverDose here."

We looked at each other for a few seconds then he continued,

Prof: "... uh, what class do you think this is?"

Me: "...uh... an OD. Organizational Development?"

Prof: "I think you came to a wrong class."

And there you go, the school made a last minute classroom change that I didn't know about. I was indeed sitting in a

wrong class at the right time. The class was called "Brief Counselling Strategies" taught by Dr. Ronald Warner who has since become my teacher, mentor, and friend.

3. Once you fell in love with it you decided to travel for training. Where did you go? And what difference did it make?

I got to travel to many different places pursuing what I love – how cool is that?

The very first trip related to Solution Focused was to a SFBTA conference. It was in Albany, New York that year. I particularly remember Heather Fiske's plenary session with such clarity as it was a fresh shock (in a very good way). I was disrupted in my patterns of thinking as she talked about "reasons for living" instead of "reasons for dying" working with suicidal youth. The conference somehow felt like "coming home" although I didn't know anyone there. I really hope many of SF practitioners really consider attending SF conferences – SF Symposium in Toronto in May, EBTA in September, SFBTA in November – they are just wonderful buffet of "good stuff".

4. You have amazing dreams for the SF coaching program. You want to continue to develop it and make it world-renowned as "the" program to take to become a coach, can you speak to that? So if a miracle happened what would be different?

You can get me going on this, you know. It may sound rather counter-intuitive, but the “big M” miracle for me would be that... people will be having better dialogues in their various life-worlds already so that teaching solution-focused will be redundant. And of course there are a few “small m” miracles for now until that happens. I think it is already world-renowned. I am so grateful for our guest instructors who are world-renowned and well-respected, and they go out of their way to educate and support our students. I have no idea why they say yes to my invitation – and I am just so grateful.

“My mom has an encouragement reflex, and asked me various versions of miracle questions when I was growing up. She still reminds me that I can do whatever I want to be.” Haesun Moon

Probably this is the only program in the world where the students will have the exposure to such cadre of international solution focused faculty members. This year we have Peter Szabo, Ben Furman, Chris Iveson, and Peter de Jong joining the program. Really, where else in the world do you get to study with all these founders of solution focused in one program? In fact, I just realized that these are all small miracles already. Thank you for asking – what a great question.

5. **One of your many admirable qualities is your ability to attract top SF people to come to teach in your program. Who is**

coming this year, when are they coming and how do you get them to come??

I am not sure if it is my quality that makes it happen. In fact I just ask in big big hopes that they may say yes, and they indeed say yes. I think it shows their generosity and passion for SF. It's funny, whenever I invite someone for the first time to come and teach in the program, I

often think to myself “is this what it feels like to ask someone out for a date?” because I really like them and I don't want to hear “no.” But I ask anyway because I also think to myself ‘so what if they no, maybe it's the right person but not the right time.’ And of course promising them a treat to a rare class of curious and pleasant professionals always seems to win their heart.

6. **What is a technique or SFT question that you find especially powerful and useful to people (notice my pre-suppositional language)?**

Detailed and meaningful compliments. That pre-supposes you listening very diligently and intently to what's wanted, what's important, and their existing abilities. Sometimes such compliments look like a big-excited nod, sound like a deeply-touched mm-hmm, and often I find myself repeating their own “key” words that seem to unlock their selves.

But a sure sign of a refined practice is to get your clients to compliment themselves. That's the most powerful tool I've noticed.

7. What or who has truly influenced your work and why?

In "doing" the SF work, my clients and students influence my work as I learn from their responses and my reflections of our interactions. But most of all, I learned "doing what I am" from my parents. I remember my dad telling me a story when I was 3, he taught me opera by telling me stories, and he still tells me stories whenever we have family dinner together. My mom has an encouragement reflex, and asked me various versions of miracle questions when I was growing up. She still reminds me that I can do whatever I want to be. I think I naturally tell stories when I teach, and I find encouragement as my natural expression of admiration for my students and clients. That is one of the reasons behind my dream of changing dialogues at home, at schools, and in the workplaces.

8. We always like to ask our esteemed interviewees what advice they would give to developing coaches/therapists?

Videotape your sessions and learn how to learn from it. I would highly recommend learning "microanalysis", that transformed my practice. And when you think you had an awful session, get over yourself. When you think you had an awesome session, get over yourself.

9. Any last words??? A million thanks!!!!

Just to invite SF People to the SYMPOSIUM on May 12th to the 15th entitled;

"The Power Within: Transforming Dialogues for Mental Health at Workplace" with Dr. Ben Furman

Several myths around mental health at workplace includes the notion "the time will heal". Many leaders are still advised to "toughen up when the going gets tough" and told that "it is lonely at the top". Especially in workplaces where one is expected to endure strenuous mental and physical pressure such as law enforcement, healthcare, education and various social and service-oriented occupations, such emotional labour is often considered to be an occupational risk one takes on. It results in staff turnover, faltering sense of satisfaction, and added costs due to decreased quality and productivity.

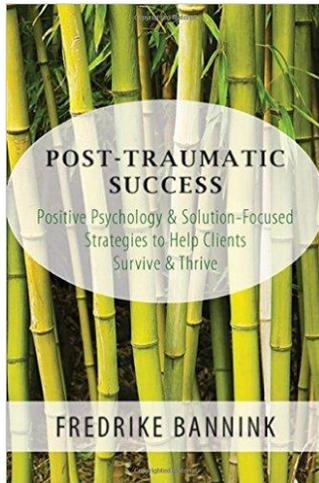
What if there is a much simpler and better way to not only withstand all the lemons of life, but in fact there is a way to leverage on such experience to transform and refine one's identity? What if organizations can build a culture of courage, excellence, and resilience on such experiences? What is different about those individuals and organizations who thrives despite adversity?



Book Review:

Post Traumatic Success: Positive Psychology & Solution-Focused Strategies to help Clients Survive and Thrive

By: Fredrike Bannink



“What does not kill me, makes me stronger.”

Move over John Grisham and Stephen King! In the past few years Fredrike Bannink has become one of our favourite writers, with exceptional books such as *Practicing Positive CBT; 1001 Solution-Focused Questions; Solution-Focused Conflict Management; and Handbook of Positive Supervision*. Fredrike has done it again with this book!

Post traumatic Success is an excellent resource for the library of any Solution-Focused therapist and especially for those of us who work with clients with trauma backgrounds. Bannink combines the theory and practice of positive psychology and solution-focused brief therapy to the often challenging ‘trauma’ population. Instead of focusing on pathology, the past and the client as a victim, Fredrike Bannink focuses

on post traumatic success, and the three R’s: Recovery, Resilience, and enRichment. Bannink challenges the myths of trauma work and provides the results of several studies that suggest that traumas are not always debilitating and that most people are resilient and even grow from these experiences. Bonanno, Rennie and Dekel (2005), state that resilience is often the most commonly observed outcome following a traumatic event. Bannink also cites the drop-out rate for traditional trauma therapy at 47 to 50 percent calling this a “lack of consumer confidence.”

Bannink starts her text by laying the foundation by providing thorough information about positive psychology, solution-focused approaches and post-traumatic success. She then describes how growth works, including the importance of a positive therapeutic alliance, leading from ‘a step behind’, and using acknowledgement and validation to build hope. Bannink describes follow-up sessions and how to use consolidating questions to build the ‘growth mindset’. She also cites Miller and Duncan’s research on feedback informed treatment.

In her book Bannink provides over a hundred exercises, thirty-three cases, and forty stories. She also provides a multitude of questions from her own work and from the work of giants in the field such as Ben Furman (What do you think helped you survive your difficult childhood?; What have you learned from your difficult childhood?; In what way have you managed in later life to have the kind of experiences that you

were deprived as a child?) and guidelines for therapy with survivors from Bill O’Hanlon who originally introduced the term “post-traumatic success”. All these are excellent tools for clinicians and extremely helpful. In true SFT style Bannink also provides “Skeleton Keys”, interventions that can “initiate change even when therapists do not know in detail what the problem is.”

The last section of the book Bannink offers ideas and solutions for over 20 frequently asked questions, and she provides appendices that include protocols for the first session, finding exceptions and information on externalizing problems. All I can say is WOW!!

find two words that best describe us it would be ‘passionate’ and ‘committed’.

Every holiday season our clinic embarks on a fundraising frenzy, we even have a committee that calls themselves “The Humbug Committee”. For the past few years they have organized events that have become treasured rituals in our Canadian Clinic. In the month of November every Wednesday is soup day. Clinicians volunteer to bring a pot of home-made soup, there is a selection of two soups to choose from every week all for the low price of six dollars for unlimited (well, until it’s all gone!) soup and bread. We all congregate in the conference room and eat communally complimenting the delicious feast in front of us.

When December rolls around we are ready for the next event – our toy drive! We all choose names out of a hat and we buy a toy based on what we think the colleague whose name we have drawn would have liked as a child or teen! We wrap our gifts and at our luscious, scrumptious pot-luck lunch in our beautifully decorated conference room (with a projected image of a roaring fireplace on our white screen) we open our presents before stocking them up for delivery. The laughter and good cheer that this activity produces is unbelievable. We end the fundraising with a bake sale eagerly anticipated not only by the internal staff but by the outside world as well. The cookies sell out within the half hour!

This past holiday season we raised \$822.40 and donated 20 gifts for the toy drive. We recently



Clinical Pearls:

By Dina Bednar, MA, RMFT, RP

Sometimes clinical pearls are not only found in our sessions with clients, but what we as therapists do as people. We are very fortunate to work in a children’s mental health clinic that demonstrates the highest standards of practice for psychotherapy – we meet as teams and as a multi-theoretical community often, discussing clients, theory, philosophy, evidence-based practice, practice-based evidence and article/book discussions. If we were asked to

received a letter of thanks from Food Share in Hamilton thanking us for our donation and informing us that the amount donated (\$822.40) actually bought them \$ 4, 112.00 worth of food for families in need! Wow!! What we saw as a small amount was quite the opposite. There are many lessons learned from our fundraising activities – the importance of working together, having a goal, celebrating along the way, complimenting each other and the efforts made, being creative, and having lots of fun and laughter! Most of all, the importance of getting out of our offices and doing something for our community reminds us that we can make a difference! And that is priceless, one may even say a clinical pearl!



UPCOMING EVENTS:

...Not to be missed!!!

- **“Single Session Therapy Training” Workshop:**
We (Geri and Dina) will be training in Regina April 25th & 26th, 2015 at Family Service Regina. For more information, go to www.familyserviceregina.com or call: (306) 757-6675. We will also be at Yorkton, SK with the same Single Session workshop on April 27th & 28th hosted by Mental Health and Addictions Services, Sunrise Health Region.
- The University of Toronto, School of Social Work provides Solution-Focused Counselling and Coaching training. The Counselling options for Winter 2016 are: **Basic Skills:** Friday, January 22 to Saturday, January 23.

Mindfulness and Solution-Focused Theory: Friday, January 29th to Saturday, January 30, 2016. **Adjustment to Loss and Grief:** Friday, February 19 and Saturday, February 20, 2016. **Child and Adolescent:** Friday, April 1, and Saturday April 2, 2016. **Promoting Post-Traumatic Growth:** Friday, April 15th and Saturday, April 16, 2016. For more information please go to: www.socialwork.utoronto.ca/conted/certificate/SFC.html

- The SF Coaching Options at University of Toronto are **Positive Psychology of Solution-Focused Brief Coaching:** Friday, January 15 and Saturday, January 16th, 2016. **Mindful Presence of a Coach: Refine the Tool of Language:** Friday, February 26 and Saturday, February 27, 2016. **Solution-Focused Applications in Organizations:** Friday, March 18 and Saturday, March 19, 2016. **Solution-Focused Training Methodology:** Friday, April 15 and Saturday, April 16, 2016. To see the Open House Slides please use this link: [Open House](http://OpenHouse)
<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1o-v-v2woQiYEluMngZOSzp-FljrLiG1cjRVpqQBtDKM/edit?usp=sharing>

For more information on any of these or any other topics, events or questions please visit:

www.CanadianSFBTC.com