

Solution Circles

Getting Unstuck A Creative Problem Solving Tool

Time required: 30 minutes.

People per Solution Circle: Best with 5-9 people

Roles: *Problem Presenter.* Who has in-depth knowledge of the problem and the goals.

Process Facilitator. To guide the structure of the meeting, keep time, and make sure that everyone stays focused on the topic (using a visual timer can be very helpful).

Note Taker. To note the main points of the discussion, using flipchart paper that can be placed around the room and easily seen by all.

Creative Team. A creative and optimistic team who know the child well.

This type of meeting is a short and powerful tool that makes the best use of everyone's time and abilities. People work together to find the answers to a shared problem, find ways of overcoming obstacles or barriers to achieving a shared goal, concentrate on solutions. It is effective at getting "unstuck" from a problem by drawing together the collective abilities of all those important in the child's life. The Facilitator should start by welcoming people to the 'circle', and explaining the process of how the group will work together.

Step One: Problem Presentation (6 minutes) (PP only)

Aim. The Problem Presenter will have 6 uninterrupted minutes to outline the problem, making use of examples that will help people to understand the situation.

Facilitator. Keep time and makes sure no one interrupts.

Note Taker. Summarise this information on a flip chart.

Step 2: Clarify (6 minutes) ALL

Aim. The Problem Presenter and Group explore possibilities and seek clarification, but both questions and answers must be brief and to the point. The focus should be on what will help, not what can't be done.

Step 3: Solution Generation (6 minutes) Creative team only

Aim. Next, the group have six minutes to suggest and explore creative ideas in a helpful, 'can do' way. There is no room here for clarifying, questioning, or making barriers – they will only serve to stem the creative solution finding process. The problem presenter stays quiet here!

Facilitator. Will need to make sure that everyone has a chance to speak but must not let anyone dominate or try to interrupt the flow of good ideas.

Problem Presenter. Simply listens - without interrupting (can be quite difficult!).

Note Taker. Note down the main points of each idea.

Facilitator. Keep the group on track.

Step 4: Action Plan (6 minutes) All

Aim. The Problem Presenter and the Group decide which of the suggestions can be taken forward in the next week. At least ONE step should be initiated within 24 hours. Choose a participant to contact the presenter and check progress 1 week later, and to feedback back to group.

Facilitator. Gain commitment of what, where, who and how often these will happen.

Note Taker. Summarises each action, and label who, where and when things will happen.