

Jürgen Boss

Creating Solution-Focused Working Environments for Referees



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EXERCISE ONE INDIVIDUAL SUCCESS

The exercise is carried out in groups of three or four persons.

STEP ONE. AGREE ON A CHEER SIGNAL

The first task of your group is to agree upon a cheer signal such as a hand gesture, a facial expression, or any form of hail that you will use during the exercise to indicate appreciation for group members who say something that impresses you.

STEP TWO. REPORT YOUR SUCCESS EXPERIENCES

After agreeing on the cheer signal, each member of your group tells the others about a success experience they have had at work, one of which they feel proud of. This does not need to be something extraordinary; a small everyday success will do just fine.

STEP THREE. USE THE CHEER SIGNAL

As members of your group are reporting their success experiences, others should respond to the stories positively, employing the cheer signal agreed in step one.

STEP FOUR. FIND OUT HOW THE PERSON SUCCEEDED

Discuss each success story trying to discover what the person who told the story thought and did that made the success possible. Use questions such as:

- Where did you get the idea?
- How were you able to do that?
- What is your „secret“?
- How did you come to think of something like that ?
- What qualities or talents do you have what make it possible for you to do things like that ?

STEP FIVE. FIND OUT HOW OTHERS CONTRIBUTED

Continue to explore the reported success by attempting to establish the contribution made by other people such as colleagues, a manager, or even family members. Use questions such as:

- Who helped and how?
- Who did you learn that sort of thing from?
- Who encouraged you?
- Who could you acknowledge for making that possible?

STEP SIX. USE THE CHEER SIGNAL AGAIN

Finish the exploration of each success story by repeating the cheer signal and saying something along the lines of "You have good reason to be proud of what you did!" to the person reporting the success.

EXERCISE TWO GROUP SUCCESS

Create groups of four to six people.

STEP ONE. CHOOSE YOUR TEAM LEADER

Imagining you are a working team and choose one person as your team leader.

STEP TWO. IDENTIFY THREE STRENGTHS

Imagine that your team has just received the results of an annual survey of your working environment and team effectiveness which reveals your team's strengths and weaknesses. Write down three of the strengths indicated by the survey.

STEP THREE. PICK ONE

Pick one of the three strengths that seems particularly relevant to you. This is the one you will be working on.

STEP FOUR. ANALYSE THE STRENGTH

The team leader discusses the selected strength with the team following these instructions:

1. Find out how this strength has manifested itself in practical ways over the last 12 months.

Ask team members to report concrete examples of ways in which the selected strength has been revealed in the team's everyday work.

2. Establish the causes of the strength.

Ask team members to describe their personal contribution, and also which actions they have observed others take that explain the selected strength. Also find out which team member - you included - should be thanked for contributing to this strength and for what.

3. Discover how your team can ensure that the selected strength will be maintained in the future.

Ask each team member to think what they can do to maximise the likelihood that the strength being discussed will feature again in next year's annual survey.

EXERCISE THREE

SOLUTION-FOCUSED COACHING

The following exercise is a guided interview to be carried out in pairs. You will take turns to interview each other using the form on pages 24-25 and recording your partner's answers on it. Feel free to take photocopies of the two-page spread so that you can use it on other occasions. The objective is to provide both parties with personal experience of how discussing goals in a solution-focused way influences motivation. The interview consists of the following nine questions:

1. What is your goal?

Start by asking your partner to choose a goal: "What would you like to learn, to change, or to accomplish?"

2. How will you personally benefit by achieving your goal?

Help your partner think about the personal benefits of achieving the goal. As benefits are mentioned, continue by asking: "How will that be good for you?" Help your partner think of several of benefits by asking: "What other benefits can you think of?"

3. How will other people benefit?

Help your partner identify additional benefits by broadening the perspective and asking them to imagine how achieving the goal will be beneficial for their colleagues, their customers or even members of your their family.

4. Where are you now?

Ask your partner to assess their current position on a scale from one to ten, where one means the goal hasn't even been thought about and ten indicates it has been achieved. Build your partner's goal into your question. For example: "Where would you place yourself on a scale of one to ten if one means that you have only just heard about this new time management system you want to learn and ten means that you are an expert in using it and getting invitations from others to teach them how to use it!"

5. What did you do to get there?

This question follows directly from the previous one. The answer given by your partner to the scaling question is probably higher than one. You can therefore continue by finding out what they have already done to get to where they now feel they are.

6. Who supported you and how?

Help your partner identify as many people as possible who have in one way or another helped, supported or encouraged them to make their way up their current position.

7. What would indicate to you that you have moved one step further up the scale ?

The aim of this question is not to request an explanation of what your partner intends to do next in progressing towards their goal. The aim is rather to help them create a vision of the potential progress they can make:

"Let's imagine that we meet one day next week and I ask you where you are on the scale. You tell me you have moved one step up, and I ask you what tell me you have moved one step up. And I ask you what has happened. What do you tell me?"

8 What are your reasons for believing your goal is achievable?

The aim of this question is to help your partner identify factors that give them good reason to believe they will be able to achieve their goal. Such factors may include personal abilities and strengths, progress already made, previous experiences of achieving similar goals, and support from other people.

9. When you have achieved your goal, who will you be thanking for their support and help ?

Help your partner imagine that they have achieved the goal. Satisfied with what they have accomplished, they feel grateful to everyone who helped them succeed. While your partner is visualizing this scene, ask them who they are thanking and what the thanks is being given for.

<p>What is your goal? What do you want to learn or to become better at? What do you want to accomplish?</p>	
<p>What will be the benefits of this goal to yourself?</p>	
<p>What will be the benefits of this goal for others? Who will benefit? How?</p>	
<p>Where do you place yourself on this scale indicating progress towards your goal ?</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</p>
<p>What have you done to get this far ? What else have you done ?</p>	

<p>What would be a sign to you that you have moved one step further up the scale?</p>	
<p>Who has helped you so far and what have they done to help you?</p>	
<p>What gives you confidence that your goal is achievable?</p>	
<p>Who will you be thanking when you have achieved your goal for what?</p>	

EXERCISE FOUR

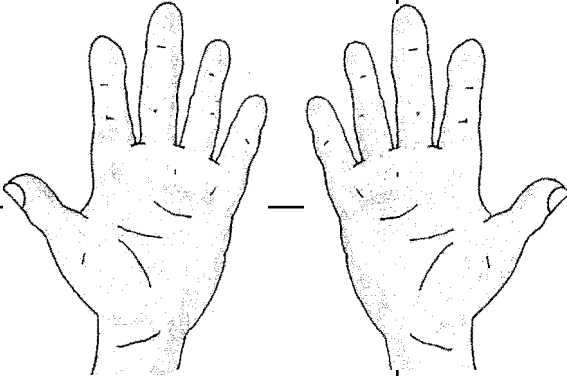
PROBLEMS IN GOALS

In this exercise, you will practice converting problems into goals, or redefining problems as goals.

Start by completing the Problem column in the form on the next page. Do this on your own. Describe a problem in each cell: in the top one, detail one of your bad habits or a negative characteristic that you'd like to get rid of. Avoid anything that is too personal – you'll be linking up with a partner to continue the exercise. If you cannot think of any bad habit or negative characteristic that you have, just leave this cell blank. In the second cell from the top, detail a bad habit or annoying feature that you don't actually have but someone who knows you claims that you do have. In the third cell from the top, detail a bad habit or an annoying characteristic which someone you know has, and in the bottom cell detail a collective problem, something you consider to be a problem in your own workplace.

When you are done, find a partner and help each other to figure out the corresponding goal for each of the problems you have listed in the Problem column, entering them in the Goal column on the right.

As you are helping each other convert problems into goals, make sure that each of the goals is stated in positive terms expressing how you want things to be or how you want people to behave, not how you don't want things to be or how you don't want people to behave.

	Problem <i>What you don't want</i>	Goal <i>What you do want</i>
<p>One of your bad habits or negative characteristics that you'd like to get ride of.</p>		
<p>A bad habit or annoying characteristic that you don't have but someone claims that you do have</p>		
<p>A bad habit or annoying characteristic that someone who you know has</p>		
<p>Something you consider to be a collective problem in your workplace</p>		

FOURTH SESSION OFFERING CRITICISM INFLUENCING OTHERS SUCCESSFULLY

When someone within a working community acts in an undesirable manner neglecting obligations, working in a less-than-satisfactory manner or behaving inappropriately - people experience an urge to intervene.

person concerned does not accept the feedback, becomes defensive and starts blaming others for whatever it is they are being criticised for.

The table on the next page presents some useful principles that can help you communicate critical feedback in a way that helps the recipient to hear you and take what you are saying on board.

PRINCIPLES OF CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM

Principle	Explanation
Speak about how someone acts or behaves, not about what kind a person they are	It is easier for people to accept being criticised if the focus of attention is on how someone acts or behaves rather than what they are or what they stand for.
Instead of words, such as 'always', 'again' and 'never' use words such as 'sometimes' and 'now and then'.	It is easier for people to accept criticism if what is being said concerns something they do occasionally or every once in a while rather than something they do constantly or all the time.
Offer an non-judgmental explanation of why someone acts or behaves in the way they do	It is easier for someone to accept being criticized if an individual voicing criticism avoids implying that the behavior being discussed is either deliberate or the result of stupidity. Explanations such as 'You didn't know', 'You didn't come to think of it' or 'You must have forgotten about it' are much easier to accept.
Explain how you would like someone to behave from now on.	It is easier for people to accept criticism if your feedback includes a request regarding how they should act in similar situations in the future.
Explain how the requested behavior would be beneficial.	It is easier for someone to accept what you are requesting if they understand what the positive consequences for themselves and others can be.
Show your confidence in a person's ability to act as requested.	It is easier for people to accept a request when they realize you believe in them and that you are confident of their ability to act in the desired manner.
Decide together on how similar situations will be dealt with in the future.	It is easier for someone to act in a different way if they participate in the planning process and in deciding how others can provide support.
Offer positive feedback.	People are more likely to follow through if you conclude the exchange with a compliment about how they have responded to your feedback

EXAMPLE

Let's imagine that Jack has the habit of responding negatively to ideas and suggestions proposed by his colleagues, quickly saying something blunt such "It'll never work!" or "Makes no sense at all". Because you have seen that his manner has an adverse effect on the team's creativity, you want to offer him feedback. How would you express your criticism applying the principles in the table on the previous page?

Here is one possible formulation:

Jack, I've noticed that even though you may not be aware of it yourself, when team members suggest new ideas and you think they are being unrealistic, you sometimes state your opinion rather bluntly.

I know you don't mean to be rude, you're just being honest - and often you are correct. Even so, I'd like you to give them more time to develop their ideas and also think how you could perhaps present your own thoughts by linking them to ideas coming from others. I'm sure this would improve feelings within the team and make us more creative. I also think other people will show more interest in your ideas if you start doing more of this.

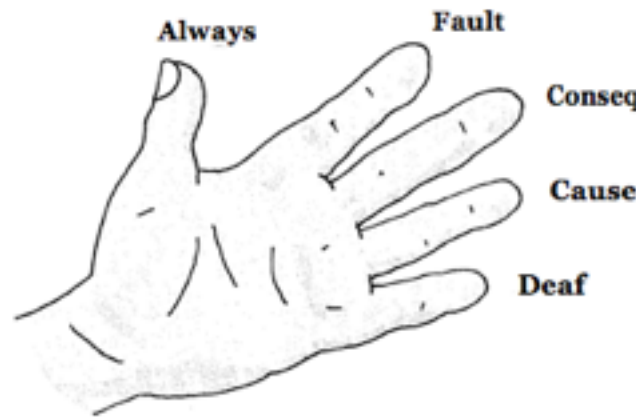
This shouldn't be a problem for you. We've been in several meetings where people have been happy precisely because you acted this way. What do you think?

EXERCISE FIVE THE WHINGE HAND AND THE WISH HAND

This exercise is done in pairs. Each person has a partner in two different roles: the Whinge hand and the Wish hand. The exercise is done in a solution-focused approach - we focus on solutions rather than on the problem.

The exercise starts with the Whinge hand criticizing your partner's habit or an unhelpful behavior.

You will first of all focus on the principles of the Whinge hand, following the principles of the Wish hand.



back to their own life - we call it the Wish hand.

The Wish hand is solution-focused.

at you will not interrupt.

using the same flaw.

WHINGE HAND

The **thumb** is called the *Always thumb* and stands for continuity and stability. When you criticize your partner use words such as 'always', 'constantly' 'every time' 'never' or 'time and again' to emphasize that the undesirable behavior is recurrent.

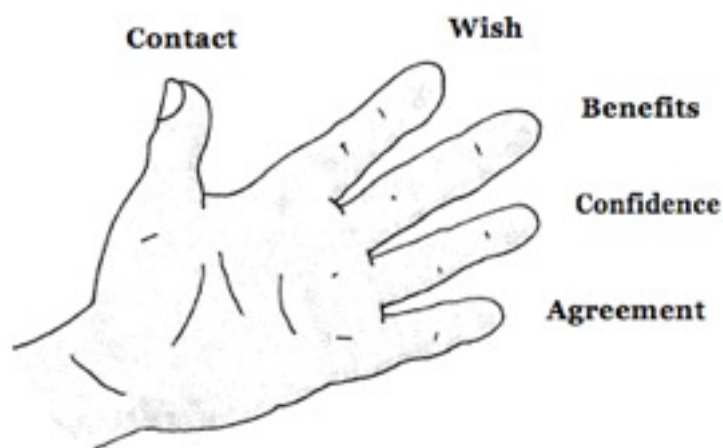
The **index finger** is called the *Faultfinger* and stands for what someone does wrong. Explain to your partner exactly what they do or don't do, providing examples to ensure they understand what you are talking about.

The **middle finger** is called the *Consequence finger* and stands for the negative effects that ensue when someone acts in a wrong way. Make your partner aware of the many negative effects that their undesirable behavior has had on themselves and others, and don't hesitate to include a prediction of likely future consequences if they continue to act as they do.

The **ring finger** is called the *Cause finger* and stands for blaming explanations. Invent an explanation for why your partner behaves in the way they do. Make sure your explanation is hurtful by suggesting, for example, that they are selfish, irresponsible, or that they must have some personal problems that explain this behavior.

The **little finger** is called the *Deaf finger* and stands for an inability to listen to criticism. Tell your partner that the issue has been discussed with them many times on previous occasions -by several people -and wonder out loud why it is so difficult for them to hear what people are trying to tell them. Make sure you include all five fingers in your feedback. The person being criticized should just listen without saying anything.

WISH HAND



The **thumb** is called the *Contact thumb* and stands for making contact with the person you are giving feedback to and creating time and space for the communication. Open the conversation by asking your partner to talk with you. Say something such as "Do you have a minute?" "I have a suggestion for you." "I have an idea that I'd like to talk with you about." or "Is now a good time or shall we talk later?"

The **index finger** is called the *Wish finger* and stands for how the feedback is phrased- as a wish, as a suggestion, as advice, or as a request. Instead of describing to your partner how you don't want them to act, explain how you do want them to act.

The **middle finger** is called the *Wish finger* and stands for how the feedback is phrased - as a wish, as a suggestion, as a device, or as a request. Instead of describing to your partner how you don't want them to act, explain how you do want them to act.

The **middle finger** is called the *Benefits Finger* and stands for the positive effects of the behavior you are requesting. Justify your request by explaining what positive consequences you think will result if your partner does what you are asking them to do. Explain how you yourself will benefit, point out how your team or organization will benefit, and only when you have done that ask them if they think they would also personally benefit from going along with your request.

The **ring finger** is called the *Confidence finger* and stands for hope and optimism. Encourage your partner by saying something which reflects your confidence in their being able to act in the way you are requesting. You could say, for example, "I've noticed that you have recently started doing more of that." or "You've done this earlier in many situations." You can also raise people's hopes by offering help or pointing out that, if your partner so desires, there will be certainly also be others who are willing to help.

The **little finger** is called the *Agreement finger* and stands for paying attention to how the conversation is concluded. Agree with your partner on what will be done from now on and also how they would like others to remind them should they perhaps forget what they have agreed to. Finally, thank your partner for talking with you by saying something such as: "I appreciate your listening to me and the fact that we can talk to each other in such an open way."