

# Numark Core Leadership Module



Solution focused thinking

**NUMARK** 

a PHOENIX Pharmacy Partnership member

## **Session Objectives**

By the end of this workshop you will be able to:

- describe the impact of a positive can-do attitude on both themselves and others
- apply a solution focused approach to solve problems
- overcome their 'grooves in thinking' and common assumptions
- utilise creative thinking techniques to generate possibilities

## Importance of attitude

Attitude is the starting point to consider when looking at solution focused thinking.

Did you know that we talk to ourselves in our heads every 11 seconds (self-talk) and what we say will greatly impacts on what we are trying to achieve at the time.

### **Example: the '4 minute' mile**

Breaking the four-minute mile barrier was first achieved on 6 May 1954, by Roger Bannister, with the help of fellow-runners as pacemakers.

The common belief prior to this was that it was not possible to run this fast, in fact on a BBC documentary a Harley street specialist stated "It is a physical impossibility to run under 4 minutes as the human body will explode"

### **What was Roger Bannister saying to himself on this day?**

**"I can do it"**

### **What happened after he achieved the 4 minute mile?**

Two months later, two competing runners, Australia's John Landy and Bannister, ran the distance of one mile in under four minutes. John Landy had previously run faster than Roger Bannister. What had changed? His attitude, he knew he could run faster than Bannister.

### **What does this demonstrate?**

Your destiny is in your own hands whether you want to build your business or achieve the personal or business goals you set yourself.

If your self-talk is negative and you are saying things such as "I can't do that" or "I'm no good at those type of things" then the likelihood is that you won't achieve what you want to.

**"If you think you can you can, if you think you can't you can't"**

**Make success a matter of choice not a matter of chance.**

## **Solution focused thinking**

Do you ever feel STUCK? Stuck-ness happens when we run out of answers, options or opportunities. We have two choices we can see this as a problem and feel terrible that we don't know what to do OR we can focus on future solutions.

When there is a problem, many professionals spend a great amount of time thinking, talking and analysing the problem whilst the suffering goes on. Rather than focusing on what is wrong, it is much more effective to talk about solutions, just starting to think about what you 'could do' can help you feel better.

Think about the following example:

**“It is Thursday morning and you have a small pharmacy with only 3 members of staff. Two of these employees have called in sick today and the final member of your team has now told you that they will be unable to come in tomorrow also!”**

I am sure your initial thoughts will be to scream in your head and wonder what you did to deserve this! But that won't help. You need to shift your focus ASAP to see what solutions you can come up with. Who could possibly help you? Can you reduce your services? What commitments do you need to cover tomorrow? As soon as you start to think with a 'solution approach' you will start to feel like you are doing something to help.

## **Steps to adopt a 'solution focused approach' in your life**

**It starts with your attitude.** The first thing to do as soon as a problem surfaces is to discipline ourselves not to waste time worrying, moaning etc. “If you find yourself in a hole, the first thing to do is stop digging”. You have the power to let the problem consume you or tackle the problem head on.

**Identify what works and keep doing it.** Not everything will be a problem! Look at what does work for you, or what other issues you have solved in the past, is there anything you can learn from those experiences?

**Focus on what you can do and the ‘now’ not what has happened so far.** The past cannot change only the future.

**Imagine what an ideal outcome would be to your situation.** What does it look like and feel like? Rate where are now and where you want to be with the situation on a scale on 1 – 10 (with 1 being low). If you are currently at a 2 but want to be at a full 10, start to look for small solutions that can move you up that rating scale. By rating things you may realise that something is not actually that bad, and although you want things to improve perhaps a magic ‘10’ is not needed.

**Commit to take action.** Look at your options and take personal responsibility to put those actions in place to move forward as things will only change if you make it happen.

## **Creative thinking techniques – helping generate solutions**

But what if you don’t know how to come up with the solutions?

It might be great to say let’s be solution focused, but perhaps you feel for some things you just don’t know how to generate new ideas or answers.

Creativity is a skill, like any skill it requires practice, like golf, running, presenting or delegating. The more you practice the better you get.

### **Groove Thinking**

Our minds are like computers. We file information in our ‘filing cabinets’ based on what we already know. When we do things in the same way all the time or tell ourselves the same messages we create ‘grooves in our mind’.

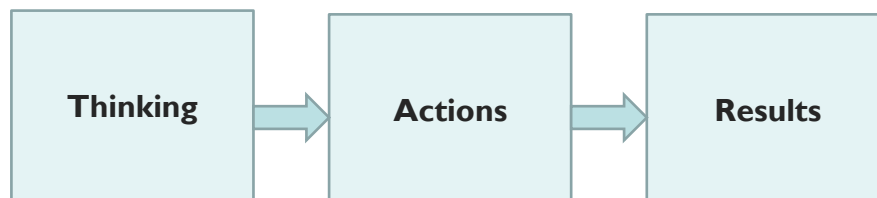
These grooves can be useful as they can filter out information and save us time and effort. On the flip side it means we might always do things in the same way and don’t look for new ways.

If we always try and tackle persistent problems in the same way, the groove gets deeper and deeper and harder to get out of to find new solutions.

The same thinking, leads to the same actions and hence the same results. Only different thinking will result in a different outcome.

## Why change the way we think?

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“If you always do what you’ve always done, you’ll always get what you’ve always got!”

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## Creative thinking techniques

### 1. Break the rules technique

Sometimes we need to challenge **our assumptions!**

We very often make up our own rules that stop us doing something which could be a good solution.

Perhaps you have reoccurring problems that you feel you can’t solve and there are some self-imposed barriers that you have created.

This technique challenges everything we take for granted when we are looking at a problem, breaking the rules looks to innovative and real solutions.

To use this technique write down all the ‘rules’ that surround it.

Then take the contrary view and break all those rules. Don’t make any judgements at the thinking stage! As you work through the ideas you may find something workable.

## **2. Go Wild! – Wouldn't it be good if...**

Imagine your ideal scenario in solving your problem! This sets your thought process free.

Once you have defined your problem write as many sentences as you can that begin with...

“Wouldn't it be good if...”

The more outrageous and out of the groove your sentences are the better.

For example, if you want to increase the number of customers entering your business then “wouldn't it be good if our customers paid to get into our store”.

Once you have a list find ways of making at least 25% of your sentences possible, by asking ‘how could we possibly do that?’ The answer we can't is not allowed! Find a way no matter how bizarre it sounds.

These techniques are very useful to use within your teams to generate lots of ideas and encourage everyone to challenge how things are done and how they could be better.