

# Book Reviews

## 1001 Solution-Focused Questions

**Fredrike Bannink**

W. W. Norton and Co., 2010, 272 pages, ISBN 9780393706345, £17.99 paperback

*Review by David Shaked*

As I was holding the book in my hands and reading the title, I thought to myself, what is the promise held in these pages? How would I know after reading the book that my practice of SF has become richer and more impactful? What would be different then? How would others notice the difference?

I knew that by being able to widen my interviewing options and by using different questions I would definitely be able to become a better SF practitioner. I was also looking forward to using SF in a more expansive way than before. I knew that by being creative with my SF interviewing, my clients would notice the difference and the impact of the coaching and change work I do would be greater.

I was also attracted to the book by its title. Having used SF coaching for a couple of years now, I knew that I could be very creative in how I apply the SF tools and ask SF questions to the situation at hand. Still, I could not imagine how the simple six SF tools could generate over a thousand different questions! At best, I was imagining 5-10 different variations of the questions for each one of the tools. I was curious about the sense of abundance emanating from the title – can there really be a thousand SF questions?

What particularly pleased me about the book? At first, I imagined the book as a giant catalogue of questions; perhaps

divided into chapters by the SF tools or the type of application (e.g. mediation, coaching etc.). I was surprised to see that the book was structured differently and contained a lot more than what I expected to get! Firstly, I loved the theoretical background to each chapter which clearly explained why the SF process works and how it differs for different situations. I also gained a much deeper understanding of the psychology behind SF.

I also enjoyed the emphasis on key words within the questions. A simple change of wording in each question can definitely make a big difference to the outcome.

Other useful chapters covered many options for subsequent sessions (while keeping in mind the intention that every SF session can be the last one), SF homework assignments that can strengthen the client's progress and a chapter on additional SF skills (including non-verbal SF!).

The actual 1001 questions finally arrive in chapter 10, although there are many good examples of SF questions beforehand. Going through this chapter is exciting and overwhelming at the same time. There are so many good questions on offer that I wanted to immediately try them all with my clients (now I need to find 1001 clients to play with...). Although it is very tempting to jump straight to chapter 10 (and you can certainly do just that), there is so much on offer in all the previous chapters. I now feel that I have gained a much deeper understanding of SF theory and various applications thanks to all that is contained in these chapters.

So, on a scale of 1 to 10 where 10 is when the dream I dreamt for myself after reading this book is fully realised all the time and where 1 means that my practice of SF hasn't gained anything, I would rate the book at eight. I particularly appreciated the deeper understanding of the mechanics of SF, the flow of SF practice from one session to the next (including what to do in-between), the exposure to SF in mediation and relationship building as well as in therapy, which I didn't know much about beforehand. Chapter 10 which I mentioned earlier was a great gift as well.

In my view, what would take this book one step further on my scale is reducing the discussion about brief therapy and SF for mental or health conditions. I would also appreciate greater coverage of SF for teams and organisations. Although I know that SF came out of brief therapy, the more exciting and intriguing applications of SF to me are within teams and as an approach to organisational change. I am already used to practising SF with individuals and would like to know more about using SF and options for interviewing more than one person at a time. The book touches this by covering situations of mediation and relationship therapy between couples or two people working together, which is a good start. There are also a few principles to apply when working with groups. I would have liked to see even more, and especially a suggested protocol or an intervention design.

Overall I highly recommend the book. It may not be a book for beginners in SF, but it is an excellent book for those wishing to deepen their understanding of SF after practising it for a while.

David Shaked is a change facilitator experienced in business improvement and strategic planning, using Appreciative Inquiry, Solution Focus and other strength-based methodologies. [david@almond-insight.com](mailto:david@almond-insight.com)