

From 1001 Solution-Focused Questions by Fredrike Bannink

Questions about Goal Formation

- What brings you here?
- How is that a problem for you?
- How do you think that is a problem for the other person?
- What is the least that you would like to achieve?
- In an ideal world, what would you like to achieve at best?
- What would you like to be different as a result of these sessions?
- What would go better if that problem were solved?
- What would be a good outcome for you?
- What are your best hopes? What difference would that make?
- What will be different in your life when you have reached your goals?
- How would that change make a difference for you?
- How will you know if you have reached your goal/if that agreement is working?
- How would important people in your life (partner, friends, colleagues) be able to tell that you reached your goal?
- How would the referred be able to tell that you had reached your goal?
- How would I be able to tell that you had reached your goal?
- What else would you like to achieve?
- What else will be different when you have reached your goal?
- What would make this session worthwhile for you?
- If your problem were solved, what would be different?
- You say you would like to have less _____. What would you like to see more of?
- What do you want to see instead of the problem?
- What do you wish to have achieved by the end of this mediation process so that you can say that is has been meaningful and successful?
- What will take the place of the problem?
- What would your preferred future be?
- Suppose you reached the preferred future. What and who would have made that possible?
 - What have you done to make that possible?
- The miracle question: "Suppose you're asleep tonight and a miracle happens. The miracle is that the problems that bring you here have been solved (to a sufficient degree). You are unaware of this, however, because you were asleep. How would you first notice tomorrow morning that a miracle has happened? And how else?"
 - In the case of an unrealistic miracle: "That would be a tremendous miracle indeed. If you were to make the miracle smaller and more attainable, what might it look like?"

- After you, who would be the first person to notice that the miracle has occurred? What would they say had changed?
- What would the day after the miracle look like?
- Suppose you could choose one scene, a picture of the moment when the miracle occurred. What would that picture look like?
- What would it be like if your problem no longer existed?
- How could you make it easier to accomplish that?
- How would your partner or another important person in your life notice that the miracle had occurred? How would they react? And how would you, in turn, react?
- What would your person be doing differently as a result of the miracle?
- If I were to ask your person what they'd be doing differently then, what would they say?
- What part of the miracle is easiest to start with?
- What are you not doing now that you would be doing then?
- "Are you ready for a small thought experiment?" Proceed to ask the miracle question.
- I see that this is a problem for you. How would you like things to be different?
- What would you be doing differently if you knew what you had to do?
- Suppose you did know. What would you say?
- What would change if you did know?
- What would already be different if you did know?
- Who might know?
- Suppose I were to ask your person the same question. What would they say?
- What would an important person in your life say is your goal?
- What would I say is your goal?
- What would God or Allah or a deceased person say is your goal?
- What would an ideal day look like for you?
- What would I see you doing differently then?
- What would you like to see go well or smoothly again as a result of these sessions?
- What is the best that could happen?
- If you were to have a dream about how you would like your life to look in the future, what would you dream?
- If you were to have a dream about a solution to your problem, what would you dream?
- What would change if you didn't have any financial constraints, for instance, because you had won the lottery?
- How would you organize your life if the doctor told you that you had another 10 or 15 years – without major health problems – to live?
- Suppose you only had 24 hours to live. What would you regret not having done?
- Suppose you go to funeral 3 years from now and the funeral turns out to be your own. What would you like the important people in your life (family, friends, colleagues) to say about you? What different would you like to have made in their lives?
- What needs to happen for you to go home satisfied after this session?

- Pretend you are living 1 year, 5 years, or 10 years in the future. Looking back, what would you say your goal was when you came here?
- How will you be able to tell that you don't need to come back again? What will be different then?
- When will you consider these sessions a success?
- How can we know when to stop meeting like this?
- In what area would you like to see the most improvement?
- Suppose I were to make a recording of the present and one of a time in the future when you have reached your goal. What difference would I see that would allow me to say 'This is the recording of the present' and 'that is the recording of the future'?
- Suppose I were I fly on the wall in your home when the miracle had happened and your goal had been reached. What would I see you doing differently then? What else would be different?
- And how would others react to that?
- Suppose you did have a goal. What might it be?
- Suppose you did know why you do certain things. How would that bring you closer to your goal?
- What would be your dream solution?
- How is that different than the way things are now?
- What would I see you doing differently then?
- Suppose there were a solution. What difference would that make for you? What would be different?
- Suppose you made a full recovery. What would have been of help to you or what would you have done to recover?
- *Suppose I ran into you 6 months from now and I asked you what steps you had taken to successfully conclude the therapy. What would you say?
- What will you do when you have solved your problem (to a sufficient degree)?
- When will you do that?
- What are you doing to do about that?
- What have you done this week to obtain a better life?
- What is needed to make a very small piece of the miracle happen?
- If the client talks about the absence of a problem or complaint: "How would you feel when the problem was gone?"
- How would you most like to see yourself?
- When are you at your best? What does that look like?
- How can you do more of what is making things go well?
- Suppose a friend of yours had the same problem. What would think their goal was? What solutions would they find? What would you advise them to do?
- If you were to think of something that someone else who is in the same situation might benefit from, what would it be?

- What would be a sign that you are on the right track to reaching the preferred future?
- What would you consider the first sign that you are on the right track?
- What would you consider a sign that things are starting to go a tiny bit better?
- Suppose this session produces a plan. What would you consider a start to your being on the right track? And what else? What do you enjoy about those times?
- How will you be using your time differently then? What different would that make?
- When you feel better, what do others notice about you that makes it clear to them that you're feeling better?
- How would an important person in your life be able to tell that you are on the right track, headed toward your goal?
- What will you be doing differently when this is no longer a problem for you?
- What do you need to know by the end of this session that you don't know right now that would allow you to say that it was good that came?
- How can these sessions make a difference for you?
- If you were to look into a crystal ball, what improvements would you see in a week, a month, or a year, and what would you use if the problem had been solved or your goal had been reached?
- What and who could help you keep your goal in view?
- Suppose you could change. What would be different in your life then?
- Suppose you were able to change something or someone. What change would you make and what would be different about your life then?
- How can insight, the processing of a traumatic event, or skills training help you reach your goal?

Questions about Exceptions

- What has changed since you made an appointment for this session?
- What is already going better since you made the appointment for this session?
- What is better already?
- What is already working in the right direction?
- What have you already tried, and which of those things helped, even if only a little bit?
- How could you make that happen more often?
- Of the things you did, what helped the most?
- What do you need so that that will happen more often in the future?
- What else has helped so far?
- At what times do you already see parts of the miracle or the desired outcome?
- What is different about those times?
- How do you manage that? And how else?
- What could you already do different right now?
- When have you caught already a small glimpse of the miracle or the desired outcome?
- What are you doing differently then?

- What did you do differently in the past?
- What other successes have you had in the past?
- How did you notice those changes?
- What do you think you did to make that happen?
- What would the important people in your life say is different now?
What would the important people in your life say you did differently then?
- Suppose another person were present. What else would they say about that?
- What were they doing differently then? How did you react to that?
- When did that small miracle last happen?
- What was different about that moment?
- What do you think that other person would say is the likelihood of this happening again?
- What do you think he or she would say you could do to increase the likelihood that it will happen again?
- If you were to do that, what do you think that other person would do differently then?
- If he or she were to do that, how would things be different for you in your relationship?
- In what situations do you feel better already?
- How is that new for you?
- When was the last time you had a good day?
- When did you manage to behave in a way that was consistent with how you would like to be?
- When is the problem absent or less of a problem? What are you doing different then?
What is different then?
- Thing back to a moment in the past week (month, year) when the problem was completely absent or was less of a problem? What was that moment?
- When is the problem not a problem? What are doing differently then? What is different then?
- Suppose you *could* think of an exception. What might it be?
- What happens when the problem becomes less of a problem or when things are going a little better?
- What were doing differently then that made things go better?
- What were other people doing differently then that made things go better?
- Who needs to do what to make that happen again?
- Suppose a miracle occurs and the miracle is that you are able to find an exception. What might that exception be?

Questions about Competencies

- Could you tell me about your assets and good qualities?
- How do you manage to _____?
- How did you previously manage to _____?

- How did you know you were able to _____?
- How did you know you could carry out that experiment?
- How did you know what was needed?
- How do you think you did that?
- How have you tackled the problem up to now, and what has helped?
- How did you find the courage to _____?
- What gave you the strength to _____?
- How did you bring yourself to do that?
- Where do you find the courage to change when you want to?
- How can you make sure that you will reach your goal?
- How will you do that, exactly?
- How could you bring about more small miracles?
- How does that good feeling help you for the rest of the day or week?
- How can you make it easier for you to perform the desired behavior?
- What do you think *you* did to make that happen?
- How did you decide to do that?
- You have a lot of great ideas. How do you come up with them?
- How do you know that this problem can be solved?
- How did you come up with the great idea to do it that way?
- How do you manage to stop that undesired behavior?
- How do you manage to be resolute enough to _____?
- Is that how you do it? Can you tell me more about that?
- What good intention did you have when you _____?
- How did you find out that these are ways that work for you?
- How did you discover that you _____?
- When did you learn that this is a good way for you?
- What gave you the sense that it was the right time to _____?
- What makes you want to make an effort here?
- What drive you to put some work into it now?
- What makes you so resolute in your opinion?
- What is the most important thing you need to be reminded of doing in order to maximize the chance that that happens again?
- What is the second most important thing to remember?
- How can I help you? What role do you see me playing in this?
- How did you manage to come today despite the fact that you're doing badly or worse?
- How did you manage to motivate yourself to come here today?
- How do you manage to stay on the right track?
- How do you manage to get back on the right track?
- What ideas do you already have for reaching your goal?

- When was your last success? How did that go, and who did what? What was your role in achieving this success?
- Suppose you were to compliment yourself on your effort. What would you say?
- What qualities and skills does this success show you that you have?
- When did you become aware that you had those qualities?
- When did other people become aware that you have those qualities?
- IN what situations are those qualities most noticeable?
- How could you avail yourself of those traits and skills even more than you're doing now?
- How would others notice that you're making greater use of those qualities?
- What is already going well and doesn't need to change?
- How can you do more of what is already going well?
- Can you tell me where your interests lie?
- What would an important person in your life reply if asked what your interests are?
- If you had a month-long vacation, what would you do?
- How do you most enjoy spending your time?
- What are you good at? What exactly does that involve?
- What do the important people in your life (partner, child, friend, parent) like about you?
- What do you like about yourself?
- What do you do better than others?
- What is easy for you that others probably find difficult?
- What was easy for you when you were a child?
- What are your hobbies?
- What activities do you find relaxing?
- What activities that you used to do would you like to pick up again?
- What have been the most significant experiences of your life (i.e. traveling, studying, winning a competition)?
- Have you ever conquered a bad habit (i.e. smoking, nail-biting)? How did you manage that?
- If so-and-so (i.e. a deceased person) could see how you live your life now, what would they be proud of you for?
- If it were possible for that person to see how you live your life now, what would they say about you?
- How would they say you've accomplished that?
- Who helped you with that?
- How did you see your parents deal with similar situations?
- How did others react when your parents dealt with those situations that way?
- What have you achieved that you're proud of?
- What effect did that have on you?

- What effect did that have on others?
- What effect would it have on you if you were given the opportunity to do that more often?
- What have you achieved that the important people in your life are proud of you for?
- What would you like to do in your life that would give you a sense of pride?
- Suppose you were able to do that. What difference would that make for you?
- In what situations have you received compliments from others?
- What different would it make for you if did agree with those/my compliments?
- What qualities do others value in you?
- We all have something unique to offer. What is it that you offer?
- In what situations do you compliment yourself?
- What is or was your best subject in school?
- What positive things would your teachers say about you?
- What is your specialty at work?
- In what area do others consult you?
- Who inspires you in your work?
- According to them, what is important for you to remember in your work?
- Which people encourage you to do this work?
- What did they notice about you that makes them encourage you?
- Which of your abilities and qualities are most valued by people and whom you come into contact at work?
- Who in your network knows that you have these qualities and abilities?
- What is the most important quality you should remember that you have when you are under pressure?
- What good traits would an important person in your life say you have that will help you reach your goal?
- How does your faith help you?
- How do you manage to keep your head above water?
- What were some successful moments for you this past week?
- What have been some successful moments in your life?
- What have been the high points of your life?
- What tells you that it's a good idea to go on engaging in the desired or undesired behavior?
- What are your good qualities?
- What do important people in your life consider to be your good qualities?
- Where do those qualities come from?
- Which qualities can you make use of to address your current problem?
- How can you utilize those qualities to address your current problem?
- How can you continue to expand on this success?
- What have you learned about your problem, and how does that help?

- What have you learned from solving problems in the past that you can apply right now?
- How did you find that out?
- What advice do you get from others?
- What do we need to discuss for this session to be useful?
- You must have a good reason to _____. Please tell me more.
- Not everyone would have been able to say or do that. So you are the kind of person who _____? Please tell me more. (positive character interpretation)
- If a client asks for advice: "Suppose you got advice from me. How would that help you?"
- What compliment could an important person in your life give you about that?
- Suppose an important person in your life had been present in that situation. What would they say you did well?
- Whom could we invite to these sessions to put you on the path toward your goal?
- In your opinion, what else needs to happen for things to go better?
- What have you considered on occasion but not yet attempted?
- How can you make it happen that _____?
- What in this conversation has made you discover that?
- Suppose we had sessions about mourning, insight, or processing trauma. How would that help you reach your goal or bring you closer to it?
- How do you hope I can help you with this problem?
- What is the best way for me to work with you?
- What did the previous therapist do and which of those things helped?
- What should I avoid and what should I definitely do?
- What do you do to control the urge to engage in an undesired behavior?
- What else do you do to ease the problem?
- How did you get through such different circumstances without giving up hope?
- How does change usually take place in your life?

Scaling Questions

- What is better since the previous session?
- What else is better?
- What's going better?
- What is different or is going differently? (with pessimistic clients)
- On a scale of 10 to 0, where 10 means that the problem that brings you here has been (sufficiently) solved or your goal has been reached, and 0 is the worst moment you've experienced, where are you now?
- What does that number stand for?
- How is it that you are already at that number?
- How did you manage to remain at that number?

- What would one step higher look like?
- What would 1 point higher on the scale look like?
- How do you already manage to be halfway there?
- How would you notice that you'd gone up 1 point?
- What would 1 point higher on the scale look like? What would you be doing different then?
- What difference would that make for you and the important people in your life?
- What do you see a next step?
- In your opinion, what would be a very small step forward?
- What does that small step look like exactly?
- What would you be doing differently then?
- How would others see that you've taken a small step?
- What would be the very smallest step that you could take?
- How great is the chance that that will work out?
- How much confidence do you have that you will succeed in doing that again?
- Suppose I'm a fly on the wall. What do I see you doing differently when you are up 1 point?
- Suppose I make a recording of the situation in which you are up 1 point. What do I see you doing differently?
- If the client reports a lower rating: "How did you previously manage to get from that number to a higher number?"
- How do you manage to remain at that number or stay stable?
- What is needed for you to maintain that number?
- How would you be able to move 1 point up the scale?
- What is needed for you to be able to move up 1 point?
- What will be different when you move up 1 point?
- What is needed for you to pretend that you are up 1 point?
- How do others with the same problem manage to move up 1 point?
- At what number do you need to end up to be content?
- And what number do you need to be so that you do not need to come back here anymore?
- Were you able to imagine you would get this far?
- What is the highest number at which you've ever been?
- Suppose I were to talk to people who knew you when you were at that number. How would they describe you?
- Suppose I were to talk to people you knew when you were at a somewhat lower number. How would they describe you?
- How has going from a ____ to a ____ helped you?
- Suppose the positive moments were to last longer. What difference would that make for you?

- On a scale of 10 to 0, what are the chances that you will find a solution?
- On a scale of 10 to 0, where 10 = very confidence and 0 = no confidence at all, how much confidence do you have that the problem that brings you here can be resolved?
- What is happening that gives you the sense that this problem can be resolved?
- On a scale of 10 to 0, how much confidence do you have that you can keep doing ____?
- What makes you think that that can be achieved?
- On a scale of 10 to 0, where 10 means I am willing to give it my all and 0 means I have no motivation at all, how motivated are you to solve the problem that brings you here or to reach your goal?
- On a scale of 10 to 0, how motivated are you to keep doing ____?
- On a scale of 10 to 0, where 10 = I have every hope and 0 = I have no hope at all, how hopefully are you that the problem that brings you here can be resolved?
- How come you (already/still) have that much confidence, motivation, hope?
- How do you manage to have so much confidence, motivation, or hope?
- What would one number higher look like? What would that take?
- How would you notice that you were one number higher? And how would others notice?
- If you were to rate how much better you're doing since our previous session, where 10 = optimal improvement and 0 = no improvement whatsoever, what rating would you give yourself?
- How come you're not at a lower number? How do you do that?
- How has moving from a ____ to a ____ given you hope?
- What would it take for you to drop as quickly as possible from the number where you currently are to a 1 or even a 0? (relapse prevention)

Questions With Which to Conclude and Evaluate the Session

Questions For Those Who Have Experienced Traumatic Events

Questions for Increasing Hope

- What is the smallest difference that would give you more hope?

Questions for Clients in a Crisis Situation

Questions for Externalizing the Problem or Conflict

Questions for Groups (Couples, Families)

Questions for Coaching Managers, Teams, and Organizations

Questions for Clients in Conflict

- What *do* you already agree on?

- What *does* work in your communication? How did you do that before the conflict arose?
- How have you resolved conflicts before together?
 - What did you learn from that and which of these lessons could you use again?
- What positive contribution does the other person make to your relationship? What do you think the other person wants to achieve by doing this?
- What could he or she do differently in the future to encourage you to adopt a different attitude?
- Would you be willing to try that approach now to see whether it works?
- Is there anything you would like to apologize for?
- What would you like to give the other person credit for?
- What would you like the other person to give you credit for?
- In what ways would your relationship improve if you didn't do those negative things anymore?
- How can the gap between you and the other person be made smaller so you can bridge it?
- What is needed for you to stop trying to convince the other person that you're right?
- What would you most like to hear from the other person at this moment?
- What would you like to be different as a result of mediation?
- What would be the first signs that things are going better between you?
- What has the other person said to convince you that they want to find a resolution to this conflict?
- What would they say that both of you need to do to get along better?
- Suppose you *were* able to find a way to resolve the conflict. To what extent would you be willing to dedicate yourselves to it?
- Suppose you were unable to find a way to resolve the conflict. What problems would that produce? And how would you want to deal with that?
- What have you noticed that gives you the sense that the other person understands you, even if only a tiny bit?
- Suppose you did have a common goal. What would it be?
- What small sign have you already detected that gives you the sense that this conflict can be resolved?
- I understand this is important to you both. What solution would meet both your wishes?
- Suppose the other person were to respect your need to/for _____. What would be different between the two of you.
- What are you not talking about that still needs to be discussed?
- If 10 indicates that you completely trust the other person, and 0 that you don't trust the other person at all, what rating would you give? How do you manage to be at that number? What would 1 point higher look like?
- If the client believes the other person should change: "And what would you yourself do differently then?"

- Suppose you had this conflict not with so-and-so but with someone else. What would your thoughts about the situation be if the other person weren't so-and-so but, for instance, your child or your best friend? What difference would that make? What solutions would you then be able to come up with to resolve the conflict and what would your approach be?
- Suppose you were to agree on what the dispute is about in the mediation. How would you describe the dispute?
- Suppose you were to sign a settlement agreement that only includes commitments you can both agree on. What might such a contract look like?
- What will happen if this mediation fails?
- When has the conflict been absent or less of a problem and what has been different then?
- At what times does the conflict cease to be a problem? How do you put a halt to it and what are you doing differently at that moment?
- How were you able to end a previous conflict together?
- How do you treat each other differently at times when there is no conflict?
- How do you resolve conflicts in other situations?
- In what way will arguing help you reach your (collective) goal?
- In what way do you usually manage to end an argument? Which of those strategies can you apply now?
- How did you work together before the current conflict arose?
- What do you want to achieve with the conflict for the children?
- What do you need from the other person to establish or reestablish a good relationship?
- What can you offer the other person to establish or reestablish a good relationship?
- What do you need from the other person so that you can split up amicably?
- What can you offer the other person so that you can split up amicably?
- Suppose the other person were to offer you what you need to establish or reestablish a good relationship/split up amicably. What would you do differently then?
- How much energy do you want to expend on the conflict? How much energy does that leave for other – more enjoyable – things in your life?
- What is needed for you to give up or to learn to accept this conflict and move on with your life?
- What are you still not able to forgive the other person for? What price are you willing to pay for not forgiving them? How long do you want to keep paying that price?
- How can this conflict improve your life?
- What is funny or even ridiculous about your conflict? How does that help you?
- If this were your last conversation with the other person, what would you want to say?
- Suppose the other person apologized. What would change in your relationship? What difference would that make? What would you start doing differently?
- How do you think the other person would react to that?

- What would it mean to you if the other person reacted differently? And how would you, in turn, respond?
- Suppose the other person doesn't apologize. How can you go on regardless?
- How can apologizing help you reach your common goal?
- What do you eventually want to achieve by demanding an apology?