

Solution-Focused Sailing

1. Which boat would you choose to be in? Why?

2. Do you think you have been taught how to be solution focused or problem based in your life? Why? Do you think this is confagious for your peers (friends)?

3. Do you feel as an 8th grader you are fully prepared to make the best decisions for your future? What would be some valuable information that would be useful for you in making these decisions?

The following fictitious story helps illustrate the difference between a *problem-focused* mind-set and a *solution-focused* mind-set.

A yacht, sailing far offshore in the Atlantic Ocean, was taking on water and sinking, forcing the passengers onto the vessel's two safety boats. For the harried people aboard the safety boats, the outlook was bleak. They could not spy land in any direction, and no one on either boat knew which way to begin paddling. They were undersupplied, cold, and wet, having only the clothes they wore and a few oars. As the boats began to drift apart, the passengers of each boat shared their thoughts as to the best course of action.

One of the safety boats held solution-focused passengers. They decided, based on the location of the sun and their best guess of their starting point, to face the boat due west and begin paddling in shifts so that they could all take turns working and resting.

The second boat, which carried problem-focused passengers, came to a different conclusion. Each time someone suggested a possible solution, someone else argued against the plan, finding reasons for its assured failure. The problem-focused crew members became convinced that rowing to land was impossible, as they were at least three hundred miles from the nearest shoreline; they had no food or water; the safety boats were not built to withstand the ripping winds and stormy seas of the Atlantic; and they were all soaked to the bone, shivering, and exhausted. Eventually, they deemed their situation hopeless. They attempted to convey their fears and despair to the companion safety boat, but to no avail, as it was already too far away for its passengers to hear their wails.

The solution-focused boat paddled on, with everyone working in shifts and fixed on survival. Soon, just as the problem-focused brethren had predicted, the solution-focused boat encountered a pronounced northerly wind, making it difficult to proceed at all in the westward direction. Refusing to surrender in the face of the new challenge, they worked to cobble a solution. By fashioning makeshift sails from their shirts, and then sharing the remaining clothing for maximum warmth, the passengers of the solution-focused boat were able to harness the wind and pick up a little speed on their journey toward land.

As these passengers were celebrating their slight but noticeable progress, the problem-focused boat was still in the presence of the sinking yacht, with its hapless passengers clinging to increasingly slim hopes of rescue with rapidly diminishing spirits. Just then, a storm moved in, and both boats began to fill with water. The solution-focused passengers were alarmed, but it never occurred to them to give up. They disassembled their makeshift sails and tied their shirts together to form a rudimentary tarpaulin to keep as much water from accumulating in the boat as possible, while simultaneously using their shoes and caps to bail out the boat. Their boat still took on a lot of water, but through vigorous effort and determination, they were able to keep afloat long enough for the storm to subside. One crew member noted that the falling rain just might save their lives. Although the rain was cold, they were all suffering from dehydration and probably wouldn't make it much longer without drinking water. They began using their shoes not only to bail out the boat but also to capture rainwater for drinking and store it for the future.

Meanwhile, the storm only served to pulverize any hopes among the passengers of the other boat, who had neither the mental discipline nor the spirit to troubleshoot

ways to combat the rain or their dehydration. Having made no progress toward land and with their boat rapidly filling with water, the passengers accepted their dismal fate.

After what seemed an eternity, the storm receded, the sun broke through the clouds, and the ocean calmed. The few remaining survivors on the problem-focused boat were grateful for the break in weather, but they knew it was just a matter of time until they too would perish. During this same period, the solution-focused crew members celebrated their victory over the storm and began to feel a renewed determination to survive. They experienced a sense of pride, relief, and satisfaction at the distance they had come, and some even jokingly compared their safety boat to a vacation cruise ship. Knowing that they had beaten the odds, they gained even more confidence in their ability to solve problems together and make it to land alive.

At this point, you obviously see the difference that being solution focused can make. We have likely all been in situations in which we were surrounded by people who focus on the magnitude of problems rather than the merits of solutions. Just the same, at times, all of us have, through frustration or anxiety, been problem focused ourselves. Does the solution-focused boat survive and make it to land? No one can say for sure. However, it stands a much better chance than the problem-focused boat. Which boat do you think teams such as the 1980 U.S. Olympic hockey squad or the 2007 New York Giants would have occupied?

In addition, consider the respective life experiences for the passengers of the two safety vessels. Imagine the experience of hunching in a cold and wet safety boat, feeling helpless in the grips of hypothermia and dehydration. Compare that with the experience of the solution-focused

4. What is your vision as a high school athlete? (What are various things you want to accomplish in the next 4-5 years?)

5. Do you view CCA Softball as a solution or a problem in your athletic journey? Why?

Problems (I think / Positives (Solutions) This because)

6. What do you think would be the best way for you to learn more about the high school athletic experience? What specific high school athletes have you talked to? Which current or past CCA athletes should you seek advice from? (Be specific with names or the type of athletes—Ex: Girls that played these sports--- Girls that earned college scholarships---Girls that participated on the most successful teams in CCA History? Etc...

Phase 3 Relentless Solution Focus

passengers: they did what they could, refused to yield, and endured heartache and trouble, but they also managed to work through catastrophe, and because they were in a solution state of mind, they were open to discovering new ways to use their circumstances to their advantage.

Whether they made it or not, they had the personal satisfaction that they never gave up. They may even have gained experience and knowledge from the ordeal that would allow them to more fully enjoy the rest of their lives, no matter how long or short. In the end, they did what they could, and they kept themselves energized and upbeat with a solution focus. They may well have overcome insurmountable odds and saved their own lives and limbs.

Overcoming Obstacles

The big question for any athlete is this: Which boat are you in? Do you focus on problems or solutions? When adversity bars your way, do you choose to fight to overcome the challenge, or do you let problems intimidate you into slumping to the floor and accepting ready defeat? Do you devise a way to keep going? Do you manufacture a means to uproot all obstacles that impede the path of growth, improvement, and success?

I recently had a client ask me, "What does it really mean to be solution focused?" Being solution focused means keeping your thoughts centered on what you want from life and what it takes to achieve what you want, as opposed to allowing thoughts of self-doubt and concern to occupy the mind. The difference between a solution focus