

## Four Reasons For Asking the Miracle Question

### *One way to create goals for therapy*

Solution focused brief therapy has its roots in the non-analytic brief therapy tradition. One thing all brief therapy has in common is that it starts with the end. Trying to figure out how the client will know he/she will have gotten what they wanted from therapy and knowing when to end. The miracle question is one of the best questions in our repertoire to help clients describe how they will know therapy is over and one that consistently provides useful descriptions. But it is a difficult question to ask and it's hard work to learn how to hold the frame of the miracle in the conversation and keep looking for the effects of the miracle in the clients' real life. So if this was the only reason to ask the miracle question there are lots of other questions that can do the job almost as well.

*The miracle question as a virtual miracle* (or the miracle question as an emotional experience)

Regularly, not every time the question is asked, but regularly and more often with increased experience in the therapist, clients will behave as if they are experiencing what happens the day after the miracle. Clients will accompany the descriptions with bodily movements as if they were doing and experiencing what they are describing. Anna describes that the morning after the miracle she will go out on the terrace with her tea and sit down in the sun and as she says this she raises her face towards the sun that is clearly there for her. Victoria's mother shows with gestures and facial expressions and tears what happens when Victoria becomes "huggy" the morning after the miracle. Emma and her mother stretches their hands towards each other and touch as they describe what will be different between them the morning after the miracle.

The sense I (HK) get whenever this happens is that it is like a rehearsal of the miracle or a virtual experience of the miracle and when this happens I always think "So this is how close it is. These people can simply go home and do it. Wow." It's a humbling experience and one that often inspires awe in clients' possibilities.

It is something that happens very rarely (if ever) when the miracle question is not asked and it is the strongest reason for asking the miracle question.

### *Prepares for exceptions*

Among the most useful exceptions and the ones least likely to be ignored are instances of the miracle already happening. When the therapist keeps asking for the details in the miracle picture (the client's preferred future), "What else will be different after the miracle?", sooner or later most clients will say things in the general form of; "... and it happened the other day". This comes as no surprise to us since clients' miracles will always be partly based on hopes for the future and partly on experiences from the past. When time is short and this doesn't happen spontaneously the therapist will make the transition into this by asking, "Does small pieces of this miracle ever happen - even a tiny little piece of it?"

Thus, the miracle question prepares the conversation for exceptions.

***Part of creating a progressive story***

We have never seen a client spontaneously start a session telling us that life is great or tell us about all the progress they did in their lives. Most clients' tell what could be called a digressive story – a story about how things are going from bad to worse.

When the miracle question is asked in the way described here – the conversation will move into the parts of the miracle that are already happening and the client's will normally (in most cases) start talking about and describing what has become better since they decided to seek help. In all these sessions the clients will talk about how life is becoming better and some of the clients will even tell us what they are doing that is making their life improve. They are telling us a story about progress and progression. And they will leave the therapy room with a progressive story about what is going on in their life.