



Staying Focused on Solutions

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Sometimes people just want to talk and be heard, without the listener doing anything else. On occasions people will say how helpful a meeting has been when we have said virtually nothing.

Sometimes however people get trapped in 'problem talk'. Constantly revisiting the problem without standing back and considering possible solutions can leave everyone frustrated, emotionally wrung-out and psychologically defeated.

What can you do?

- Make your first response a supportive one e.g.
"It sounds as if you've been having a difficult time / you feel you've been treated unfairly." Challenging the person will be more effective once you've built a supportive platform.
- Be curious about what the client is already doing to *contain* the problem, rather than be curious about how they *do* the problem.
- Ask coping questions, " How did you deal with that? What helped?" Focus on the person not the problem.
- Listen for the person's strengths and useful strategies and reflect them back to them. " So despite what has been happening, you are still managing to..."
- Slow the person down by asking to check out that you've understood them properly. Avoid passive listening.
- When the person lapses back into 'problem talk' bring them back on the solution track. " So that was a problem for you. If you came into tomorrow and it was just a little better, what would you notice?"
- You need to be willing to interrupt sometimes. If you are too polite you may never get a word in edgeways.