**STRENGTHS BASED QUESTIONS TO HELP CHILDREN AND FAMILIES NAME STRENGTHS AND HELP INFORM ASSESSMENT AND PLANS**

* What is working well?
* Can you think of things you have done that helped things to go well?
* What have you tried that has been helpful?
* Tell me about how other people are helping you to make things go well?
* Tell me about what a good day looks like for you? What makes it a good day?
* What would be happening if things were working better for you?
* What small thing could you do that would make a difference?
* What are the things in your life that help you keep strong?
* What achievements have you have made? How did you make them happen?
* What are you most proud of in your life?
* What do you find comes easily to you?
* What inspires you?
* What do you find you learn most easily?
* What do you like doing? What makes this enjoyable?
* What do you want to achieve in your life?
* When things are going well in your life – tell me what is happening?
* What would your family and friends say you were good at?
* What do you value about yourself?
* What would other people who know you, say you were good at doing?
* What is one thing you could do to have better health, and feeling of wellbeing?
* What do you think helps you bounce back?
* How have you faced / overcome the challenges you have had?
* How have people around you helped you overcome challenges?
* What are three things that have helped you overcome obstacles?
* Who is important in your life?
* If you had the opportunity what would you like to teach others?
* How would you describe the strengths, skills, and resources you have in your life?
* What do you value about yourself and what are your greatest strengths?
* What could you ask others to do, that would help create a better picture for you?
* How could/do your strengths help you to be a part of your community?
* What are three things that are going well in your life right now?
* What gives you energy?
* What would make you feel you are making a contribution?
* When now, or in the past, have you felt like you are making a difference? How did you make this happen?
* What makes you feel excited OR useful OR satisfied? Tell me about a time when you felt these feelings?
* What is the most rewarding part of your life?
* Do you know of anything else that would help you?
* What interests you?
* Tell me about a time when you responded to a challenge in a way that made you feel really on top of things?
* Tell me about any creative, different solutions you have tried. How did this work out?
* How have you, or how do you, meet your own needs?
* What kind of supports have you used that have been helpful to you? How did that improve things for you?
* Can you think of one small manageable step that would improve X for you?
* What resources such as community, people, and equipment do you have now?
* What do you like about (child/partner/parent)?
* What do you like most about yourself?
* Who do you feel safest with? Tell me about a time when you kept X safe?

**APPRECIATIVE ENQUIRY STYLE QUESTIONS**

**ACTIVITIES TO GROW CONFIDENCE USING
STRENGTHS BASED CONVERSATIONS**

There are lots of different 10 – 45 minute ways to use these cards with practitioners to develop their practice. NB: They can be used in exactly the same way with families!

Materials:

Print off the questions above. Cut up, and laminate if you wish.

Aims:

* To practice using strengths-based questions so they become familiar and come readily to mind.
* To experience being asked strengths-based questions so that the practitioner can develop self-awareness and increased empathy with service-users.
* To practice Appreciative Inquiry or active listening skills.

Instructions:

5-10 minute or ‘icebreaker’ activities

**Activity Number 1**

 Each person selects a card randomly. In pairs they ask each other the question (this could be about themselves or a person/situation they are working with.

Give clear instructions about the approach you want the questioner to use. For example:

* Do not to ask any questions and just listen.
* or practise Appreciative Inquiry.
* or, do not ask any questions but do validate what you have heard by reflecting back (paraphrasing) or using affirmative comments.

If there is time reflect back to the questioners something positive about the way they questioned/listened.

**Activity Number 2**

The facilitator chooses a card and asks everyone in the room the same question in turn.

This could give a positive start or end to any team meeting, reflective group or session.

NB: Think about the size of the group and whether you want to restrict the amount of answering time to keep the activity short.

25-45 minute activities

**Activity Number 3**

 Each person selects a few cards randomly. In pairs they ask each other the questions (this could be about themselves or a person/situation they are working with (5-10 minutes each).

Give an instruction about the questioner’s approach. For example:

* Do not ask any questions and just listen.
* or, practice Appreciative Inquiry.
* or, do not ask any questions but do validate what you have heard by reflecting back (paraphrasing) or using affirmative comments.

Each person reflects back to the whole group something positive about the way they were questioned/listened to. This means everyone in the group receives some positive reinforcement of their skills (5 minutes).

In pairs, or as a whole group. discuss how it felt to be either questioned or questioner (5-10 minutes). Some facilitator prompt questions could be:

For the person being questioned-

* How did it feel to be questioned?
* How easy or difficult was it to stay focussed on strengths?
* How comfortable did it feel to receive praise/positive affirmation?
* How do you think it feels to be a service-user being asked strengths based questions?

For the questioner/listener-

* How did it feel to use Appreciative Inquiry and keep digging deeper?
* How did it feel not being able to ask questions?
* How easy or difficult was it to use reflective paraphrasing and/or affirmative validating comments?
* How easy or difficult was it not to offer advice/start directing?
* Did you spot any times when your own values or assumptions impacted on your interactions?

Facilitator draws to a close by asking each person to think about what they have learnt from the activity and how they will use this in their practice (5 minutes). NB: if the group is large do this in pairs or small groups.

**Activity Number 4**

Use the cards to play a game in pairs, small groups or a whole group. People take turns to pick up a card and answer the question. This could be about themselves or someone they are working with. In a large group this might be one turn each but in a smaller one there could be time for several cards.

The facilitator leads a whole group discussion on how it felt to participate in this. Example questions are:

* How did it feel to be questioned?
* How easy or difficult was it to stay focussed on strengths?
* How do you think it feels to be a service-user being asked strengths based questions?
* How might you use these questions with service-users?
* What difference did it make asking these questions as a game?

**Activity number 5**

NB: this is a ‘ranking’ activity which provokes deeper critical thinking.

In pairs sort the cards into the questions into 3 columns (10 minutes).

* Questions the practitioners already ask regularly.
* Questions that are sometimes asked.
* Questions that have never been used or asked.

Next ask them to choose two questions from the ‘sometimes asked’ pile that they would like to use more often and two from the ‘never asked’ column that they would like to try (5 minutes).

The pairs feedback to the whole group and offer their rationale for their choices (5-10 minutes). NB: If the group is large pre-warn the participants that each pair will only have 2 minutes to share their ideas.

The facilitator leads a reflective discussion on the use of strengths based questions with the group (5 -10 minutes). Some prompt questions could include:

* How wide or restricted do you feel your strengths based questioning is at present?
* If 0 is: I don’t use any of these questions and 10 is: I regularly use a wide selection of these questions, where are you?
* What could you do to increase the range of strengths based questions you use? Or, how could you move from your self-assessment on the scale to a number above?
* Why does it matter that we ask a range of questions?
* What would help you extend your strengths based questioning?
* How could you help each other to extend strengths based questioning?

The group are challenged to go and try using their selected questions and ideally feedback at a future session.