

INTERVIEWS

The Growth of Solution-Focused Therapy and Practice in Poland: An Interview With Artur Lewiński, Lidia Golba and Adrian Kondraciuk

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The Polish Association of Solution-Focused Therapists (PSTTSR) is one of the largest association in Europe gathering more well over one thousand members – practitioners, therapists, psychotherapists, supervisors, and trainers using the Solution-Focused Approach in their practice. The association sets training and ethical standards and currently accredits seven training centres all over Poland. Curious to find out the history and success story behind these achievements, we approached the Board to share their story with the hope that they may inspire other aspiring organisations or initiatives around the world.

The three members of the Executive Board of the PSTTSR Association (original name *Polskie Stowarzyszenie Terapeutów Terapii Skoncentrowanej na Rozwiązaniach*) - Artur Lewiński, Lidia Golba and Adrian Kondraciuk – were first approached by the journal for an interview in October 2024. We were impressed by the wide spread of the Solution-Focused Approach (SFA) and Solution-Focused Therapy (SFT) in Poland as reflected by the number of members (over one thousand) and accredited training centres (currently seven located all over Poland). In the interview the members of the Board were invited to share the success story behind these achievements. To facilitate the conversation and overcome any possible language barrier, the questions and answers were exchanged in written form.

Could you briefly introduce yourselves to our readers, including the Association you represent (e.g. full name, year of establishment, number of members, structure) and its main activities (e.g. certifications, accreditations, publications...)?

Artur Lewiński: We're happy to share a few words about ourselves and the association. The Polish Association of Solution-Focused Therapists (PSTTSR) was founded in February 2008 and officially registered in the National Court Register on March 23, 2009. The first Board members were Klara Szttyler-Malek, Ewa Podgórska, and Anna Rytel-Adrianik. We are an independent scientific association bringing together professionals working within the Solution-Focused Approach (SFA), including psychologists,

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educators, social workers, coaches, mediators, therapists, psychotherapists, trainers, and supervisors. We may hold different roles, but we are united by a common goal – to apply the principles of the SFA both in our work and our personal lives. Initially, the Association had a few dozen members. Today, there are over 1800 of us.

Our mission is to develop, strengthen, and promote the SFA in Poland. We establish training standards for Solution-Focused Therapy and the broader Solution-Focused Approach, provide accreditation, and recommend professional centres offering training in these areas. We also monitor adherence to professional and ethical standards by SFA practitioners, based on the PSTTSR Code of Ethics.

Lidia Golba: Currently, the Association accredits seven training centres. Three of them are certified to run full psychotherapy training programs in the Solution-Focused Approach, in accordance with Polish regulations regarding psychotherapy education. An important part of our activities is also promoting SFA by providing grants for scientific research, publishing efforts, organising annual scientific conferences, and collaborating with national, international and global organisations to support the development and professionalisation of the approach.

Adrian Kondraciuk: Regarding conferences, it's worth mentioning that this year sees the 19th National Scientific Conference of PSTTSR. Our association also runs a fully independent certification programme, separate from the training centres. We offer certificates in various areas: general helping professions, therapy, psychotherapy, training and supervision. Over 200 individuals now hold PSTTSR certificates, including 27 who are certified as psychotherapists in the Solution-Focused Approach, in line with current Polish legal regulations and standards of the Polish Council for Psychotherapy.

Artur Lewiński: The current Executive Board consists of three people. Our term runs from 2021 to 2026. I've been serving as President since 2018, and it's been a great honour and joy to watch the transformations within the Association and the growing awareness among professionals providing therapeutic support in Poland. For over 20 years I've been working as a Solution-Focused therapist, trainer and recently supervisor.

Lidia Golba: I'm a psychotherapist and trainer working in the SFA model. My active involvement in the association began with our current board term, although I've been a member for nearly 10 years. Seeing the association from both perspectives, I truly appreciate the efforts of all those who have built and continue to build it. Much of that work is invisible to the public, and the final "WOW" result is always backed by the commitment of many individuals. I'm glad to be part of this effort. While 1800 members may seem

like just an impressive number, to me it represents vast potential and energy for our collective growth.

Adrian Kondraciuk: I've also been involved with the association for about 10 years. I run a private psychotherapy practice and also work at a mental health clinic at one of Warsaw's psychiatric hospitals. Additionally, I provide training and supervision for future therapists in SFA. Supporting the development of SFA in Poland can be challenging, but it also brings immense satisfaction. I remember when our approach was considered controversial in some circles. It's incredible to see how far we've come.

How did the history of the Solution-Focused Approach in Poland begin? When and by whom was it introduced? What were the dominant approaches at the time, and how was SFA received in comparison?

AL: Solution-Focused Therapy arrived in Poland in the 1990s. Among those who made this possible were Jacek and Mariola Lelonkiewicz. At the very beginning, it was applied mainly in family therapy and addiction treatment. The first training sessions and translated books focused on these areas. The SFA has widely spread within the social work realm in Poland and gained traction there.

AK: SFT was seen as revolutionary and sometimes controversial in Poland. This stemmed from its significant differences from traditional approaches and its non-pathologising stance, which was hard for many to accept at the time. However, these very differences resonated with therapists who felt disconnected from dominant models like cognitive behavioural therapy or psychodynamic therapy and were looking for new ways of working.

Poland is known for having more than one national association of SFA practitioners. In your opinion, what has contributed to such a wide spread?

LG: The creation of several organisations probably reflects different needs within the professional community. SFA is used in many areas in Poland—social work, coaching, business and psychotherapy. People seek community, and forming groups and structures helps advance shared goals. We're open to collaboration across these communities, and perhaps this willingness to work together is part of the answer.

What's the “secret” to the success of your Association, PSTTSR, as the largest national SFA association in Poland?

AL: In short: belief, vision and the voluntary work of many engaged members. Even before the association was officially established, a group of

enthusiasts implemented SFA in their practice and envisioned promoting it to professionals. Since 2005, we've held national scientific conferences for SFA practitioners and enthusiasts, with pre-conference workshops led by international experts from the US, Canada, Japan and Europe. We've also participated regularly in EBTA and SFBTA conferences, which provided valuable learning and networking opportunities.

LG: I believe that the development of training and therapy centres that adopted the Solution-Focused Approach as their core method contributed significantly to its wider dissemination. As more people learned and practised SFA, it naturally began to enter academic environments—as course content, postgraduate programmes, or elective classes in fields such as psychology, pedagogy, social work and within integrative psychotherapy schools. Among others, SFA is taught or was taught as part of postgraduate studies at the different universities. Its fundamentals are also included in psychology, resocialisation studies and in social work programmes. The basics of the approach are also presented as part of the integrative schools of psychotherapy.

AK: Our early educational and certification initiatives laid a strong foundation for a committed professional community. The association has always remained responsive and flexible to members' needs. By fostering an open, collaborative and inclusive environment, PSTTSR has attracted a large and diverse group. Our commitment to professional development through certification, workshops and ongoing education has solidified our reputation as a reliable and credible organisation. Adapting procedures to legal regulations and joining the Polish Council for Psychotherapy further strengthened our position.

How do you manage to organise so many diverse activities?

AL: The board has always consisted of three members. Obviously, three people can't manage everything alone. As the association grew, we created additional bodies: boards and committees responsible for various areas. Currently, we have: the Programme/Advisory Board, Scientific Council, Ethics Committee, Certification Committee, Publishing Team, Publishing House and the Board of Supervisors. Each has a chairperson who stays in regular contact with the main board. Additionally, we form task committees for specific projects. Recently, for example, you, Andreea, were appointed as PSTTSR's representative for coordinating research initiatives.

AK: One such task committee was the Certification Standards Team, which I was part of. Appointed for a three-year term in February 2021, we worked on aligning our certification standards and procedures with the guidelines of the Polish Council for Psychotherapy and the Ministry of Health.

LG: It's also important to emphasise that many people are involved in the association's work on a voluntary basis. Members can organise local chapters or form Thematic Sections on specific topics. Currently, we have ten local chapters across Poland - in Olsztyn, Białystok, Warsaw, Ciechocinek, Lublin, Rybnik, the Tricity area, Poznań, Kraków, Katowice. There are also five sections: Therapy for People with Addiction Experience and Their Families, Family Therapy, Sports Psychology, Child and Adolescent Therapy, and Suicidology. It's a vast network of people contributing to SFA's development in different areas.

What are your Association's biggest achievements?

AL: We're definitely proud of popularising SFA in various helping and educational contexts. Today, SFA is a recognised approach in Poland, gaining credibility and respect. We're proud of regularly organising scientific conferences that serve as platforms for knowledge and practice exchange. We also launched the Association's publishing house, which publishes both Polish and international SFA works.

LG: Last year, we published the Polish translation of Thorana Nelson's (2018) book *Solution-Focused Brief Therapy with Families*. In progress, there are: Eve Lipchik's (2002) *Beyond Technique in Solution-Focused Therapy*, Frederike Bannink's (2010) *1001 Solution-Focused Questions: Handbook for Solution-Focused Interviewing*, and Myriam Le Fevere de Ten Hove's (2007) *Brief Therapy. Manual for the 'Bruges Model' of Psychotherapy Applied to Children and Adolescents*. More publications are on the way. Since 2015, our association has also been publishing an online journal titled "*Solutions*" ("[Rozwiązania](#)"). So far, ten issues have been released. Each new issue is dedicated to different theoretical and practical aspects of SFA, including its applications in therapy, education, organisations, and other areas of professional practice.

AK: In 2021, our Association began adapting its procedures to the standards of the Polish Council for Psychotherapy and Ministry of Health requirements—something we have already mentioned. This responded to requests from members who wanted PSTTSR certifications recognised under Polish law, enabling practice within the National Health Fund. We completed this process in June 2023. On February 18, 2024, after meeting all the required criteria, the Polish Association of Solution-Focused Therapists was officially accepted as a member of the Polish Council for Psychotherapy at the General Assembly. We now grant psychotherapy certificates in the SFA model according to current Polish regulations.

What has been the most difficult challenge for your Association, and how

have you handled it?

AL: One major challenge has been the significant growth in our membership. We've gone from a small group of enthusiasts to a large organisation, and that brings the need for structural changes.

LG: For example, communication becomes a challenge; keeping in touch with so many active people in various groups and managing projects is quite demanding, especially since, as we mentioned, our work is voluntary and done after our regular working hours.

AK: Sometimes even small issues or questions take time to address. We're currently seeking ways to streamline operations in an organisation of this size. But we know we can rely on our members and their involvement. Time and again, they've surprised us with their readiness to take on tasks. That gives us confidence that we'll find solutions once again.

What are your goals for the future?

AL: In brief? To make a difference! I firmly believe we are living in truly fascinating times marked by shifting paradigms (reminiscent of the scientific revolution as described by Thomas Kuhn, 1962). More and more people want to deal with changes in their lives in different ways from their ancestors. More and more professionals are ready to give them assistance in a way that is more 'ecological': co-operative, co-constructive and strengthening. I am convinced that SFA is an empowering path for these fascinating times — in therapy, education and other areas of our lives. I sincerely hope that our association will contribute to a change that makes a real difference in the community and ultimately in the world we live in.

LG: We certainly want to continue ensuring that our approach develops and strengthens its presence in the awareness of both professionals and clients. Currently, there are ongoing efforts in Poland to introduce legislation regulating the profession of psychotherapy, and we are actively participating in the consultation process. This requires the commitment and effort of many people. Once the law is enacted, there will undoubtedly be additional areas that will need to be brought into line.

AK: We also want Solution-Focused Therapy to become an increasingly popular approach and to be widely used in psychotherapy — not only in private practice but also within the national health insurance system. Although this approach is already quite well recognised and practised, it is still relatively underrepresented in the public sector.

What recommendations would you offer to the solution-focused

communities around the world that are considering how to start, sustain and develop an association?

AL: Above all, we believe it is crucial to cooperate. Cooperate with each other, cooperate within communities of professionals, cooperate within societies. Committed work is essential and reaching ever larger groups of people seems equally important. Organising conferences and events that promote and strengthen the solution-focused approach can be one example.

AK: I think it is also important to define clear and specific goals—where is the association headed? From our experience, a significant turning point was the development of certification procedures, which encouraged people to pursue training and growth in this approach.

LG: That's right. Without such procedures, many people who were initially interested in SFT eventually chose other training programs to obtain the qualifications needed to work as therapists. Implementing certification processes enhanced the credibility of SFT among other therapeutic approaches. We also continually encourage new people to get involved in the association's activities to help foster a sense of community.

Is there anything else you would like to share with JSFP readers?

Just a message from the core philosophy: *If something works – do more of it. If it doesn't – do something different. If it isn't broken – don't fix it.* That's exactly how we try to operate.

For more information see the association website: <https://psttsr.pl/> or contact the Association directly via e-mail: stowarzyszenie@psttsr.pl

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