

BOOK REVIEWS

Solution-Focused Coaching in Asia: History, Key Concepts, Development and Applications Edited by Debbie Hogan, Jane Tuomola and Sukanya Wignaraja

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Solution-Focused Coaching in Asia: History, Key Concepts, Development and Applications Edited by Debbie Hogan, Jane Tuomola and Sukanya Wignaraja

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Review by Tara Gretton

Towards the end of 2024, I had the chance to join a long-awaited training through the Academy of Solution Focused Training in Asia. Despite the UK time difference, I joined online from midnight to 3am, and was completely immersed in their teaching. It was a powerful experience, and reading *Solution Focused Coaching in Asia* alongside it added real depth to my learning.

What stands out to me about the book is the geographical range and the richness of voices, contributors from Singapore, Japan, China, India, South Korea, the Philippines and Malaysia.

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The book is structured in eleven thematic sections, taking readers through the history and development of solution focused coaching in Asia, the philosophical alignment with Eastern worldviews, and a wide range of applications in organisations, leadership, education, community practice, spirituality — and beyond. The chapters on ‘accidental coaching’ and ‘divine coaching’ stood out to me, as they invite one to think more deeply about

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where coaching happens, and how it can emerge in unexpected, everyday or even spiritual moments. The layout allows the reader to dip in and out with ease, while the contents overall build a coherent and thoughtful picture of how SF has evolved across Asia.

The opening chapters trace the roots of solution focused coaching in Asia, including its early development in Singapore. There is a strong thread that links solution focused values with Asian philosophies, ideas of harmony, present moment awareness, and collective responsibility, which I have always felt sit naturally alongside the assumptions of solution focused practice. It is moving to see this brought to life by so many practitioners who are clearly working with depth, humility and presence.

Many of the chapters include vivid examples of coaching conversations, which bring the work vividly to life. I appreciated the clarity and care with which these were shared, and the sense of attentiveness to the words, beliefs and hopes of the people being coached. The illustrations and visual frameworks, particularly in the chapters on graphic coaching, education and visual language, add something special.

The section titles are compelling and inviting, and the content delivers on this promise. Across these varied contexts, the book encourages readers to consider what becomes possible when people come together in collective conversations about what is working and what is wanted. It speaks with clarity and heart to how the Solution Focused approach can gently challenge and shift socially constructed norms, simply through how we listen, notice and ask questions.

I was particularly taken by the section on the power of coaching in everyday conversations. It shows beautifully how, by integrating SF coaching into informal interactions, one can create a culture of growth, attentiveness and hope. It is a reminder that coaching is not just about formal sessions, but how we show up, how we listen, and how we hold space for others in all areas of life.

Each chapter ends with clear key takeaways, practical insights and reflective prompts that make the learning easy to carry forward. Whether you are just starting out with solution focus or have been using it for years, there is something in this book to inspire, challenge, and to stretch your thinking.

What I found especially powerful about the Asian take on SF coaching is how relational, respectful and hopeful it feels. There is an openness and courage in how practitioners are using the approach, bringing it into prisons, schools, businesses, family systems, and spiritual spaces. And always, there is a deep care and belief in the people being worked with. This is not about applying a model, it is about living a philosophy.

I believe this book offers a great deal for Western cultures to learn from. It invites us to consider how we hold space, how we work with difference, and how we stay close to the core of SF, while honouring the people and places we are working in. It reminds us that change comes from relationally led co-creation.

The final chapter, a reflective dialogue between the editors, Debbie, Jane and Sukanya, is a gem. I wanted to pick a single quote to end with, but could not choose. Instead, I will end with the questions they offer us, which go right to the heart of what this book is about:

- *What inspired you from reading this book?*
- *What difference might it make to your work?*
- *What are your wow moments, realisations?*
- *How might you take these ideas forward in your work?*
- *What is your next small step to build on what you have learned?*

You will need to read it to be able to answer them.

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