**What is helpful in solution-focused conversations about suicide?**

**Summary[[1]](#footnote-1)**

(Fiske, 2017) (4th ed.)

* Be mindful.
* Go slow.
* Follow the client.
* Listen with a constructive ear.
* Watch and listen for what is hopeful --to the client

--to the helper (about the client)

* Use the client’s language.
* Don’t have a conversation about suicide: have a conversation about
  + what the client (really) wants
  + details of a preferred future/miracle picture
  + rich descriptions of:
    - resources (including reasons for living)
    - ”exceptions” or instances of a better future (reasons for living?)
    - coping (including reasons for living)
    - what the client is already doing that works, even a little bit
    - signs of change
    - small possible steps
* Use *partializing language*, including qualifiers and scaling
* Use scaling as a scaffold for a conversation about change
* Balance talk about risk and reasons for dying with talk about survival and reasons for living
* Use solution-focused questions as a tap on the shoulder
* Ask relationship questions; help the client utilize relationship resources
* Help the client develop an idiosyncratic “safety plan”, i.e. a plan that gets the client’s attention, makes sense to the client, and incorporates the client’s resources and reasons for living
* Invite the client to utilize concrete reminders of hope and reasons for living
* Highlight, reinforce, and celebrate positive change
* Work on maintaining positive changes
* ………
* ………
* ………

1. With thanks to Tom Strong (1997), who challenged us to get it down to one page. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)