



Solution-Focused Scaling Questions

Goals

Exercise

15 min

Client

No

Solution-focused practices are outcome-oriented, competence-based, and incorporate principles of positive psychology to help individuals look to a future without a particular problem, rather than focusing solely on the problem itself [1]. Solution-focused therapy uses scaling questions to understand client concerns while simultaneously empowering individuals to evaluate their circumstances, become active participants in uncovering solutions, and track advancements toward a goal [1].

Solution-focused scaling questions measure individual experiences and fulfill several purposes. For instance, scaling questions can help people clarify their goals, identify actionable steps required to achieve them, and consider future consequences of reaching their desired outcome [1,2]. Further, using scales with clients can reinforce hope and strengthen self-confidence by identifying what has already been achieved and providing observable signs of future improvement and change [1,2]. Self-rated scaling also enhances self-esteem, bolsters a sense of competence in one's abilities, allows individuals to recognize that they have control over their problems, and illustrates to clients that their views and ideas are relevant [1].

While scales generally range from 0 to 10, it is important to note that the initial rating selected by clients is not the focus of scaling questions. These self-ratings are, after all, subjective. Regardless of where clients rate themselves, the aim is to help them move up the scale from the starting point and draw attention to the exceptions, strategies, and actions that allow them to do so [3].

This exercise will help clients improve their lives using solution-focused scaling questions assessing four domains: success scaling, motivation scaling, independence scaling, and confidence scaling. Each version is designed to help clients think more deeply about their current progress towards a goal, identify actions and behaviors that already work, and determine actionable steps to help them reach their desired level within each area.



Author

This tool was created by Elaine Houston.



Goal

This exercise aims to help clients improve their lives using solution-focused scaling questions. In doing so, clients can think more deeply about their current levels of success, motivation, independence, and confidence in achieving a goal and identify actionable steps that will help them reach their desired level within each area.



Advice

- While it may be tempting to challenge or critique clients' self-ratings, it is important for a therapist not to question the chosen score. Doing so may send a message that their opinions are less relevant than those of the practitioner and are likely to end potential discourse rather than facilitate it. Rather than challenge the scale, it is more helpful to accept the client's judgment and gently question why a specific score was given: "What is your thinking behind this rating?" or "What are your reasons for this rating?"
- Clients' ratings have meaning for them personally that practitioners may not fully grasp. Scores are subjective, and practitioners should avoid attributing their meaning to self-ratings. For example, if the client gives a self-rating of 4, the practitioner might assume this represents a low score on the scale. However, the client may feel that this is a moderate/average rating. The exact number is not too important. Scaling is about the shift in a certain direction, and the goal is for clients to understand what it means to progress and move up the scale from their starting point.
- On each scale of 0-10, 10 is defined as the desired situation and not the ideal one. Describing 10 as desirable rather than ideal is more realistic, and it allows the client to avoid perfectionism and think of their satisfaction with the situation.
- Some clients may give themselves a 0 on the scale, and while this is not desirable, it is not necessarily detrimental to the process. Most individuals are not actually at 0; however, their rating should be accepted regardless. All progress needs a starting point, and this number still provides a baseline for the exercise. In such cases, it may be necessary to omit step 2 of the exercise initially and subsequently repeat the exercise (with step 2 included) when clients have moved higher up the scale.



References

1. O'Connell, B. (2004). *Solution-focused stress counseling*. Sage Publications Ltd.
2. Berg, I. K., & Szabo, P. (2005). *Brief coaching for lasting solutions*. WW Norton & Company.
3. De Shazer, S. (1994). *Words were originally magic*. New York: Norton.

Solution-Focused Scaling Questions

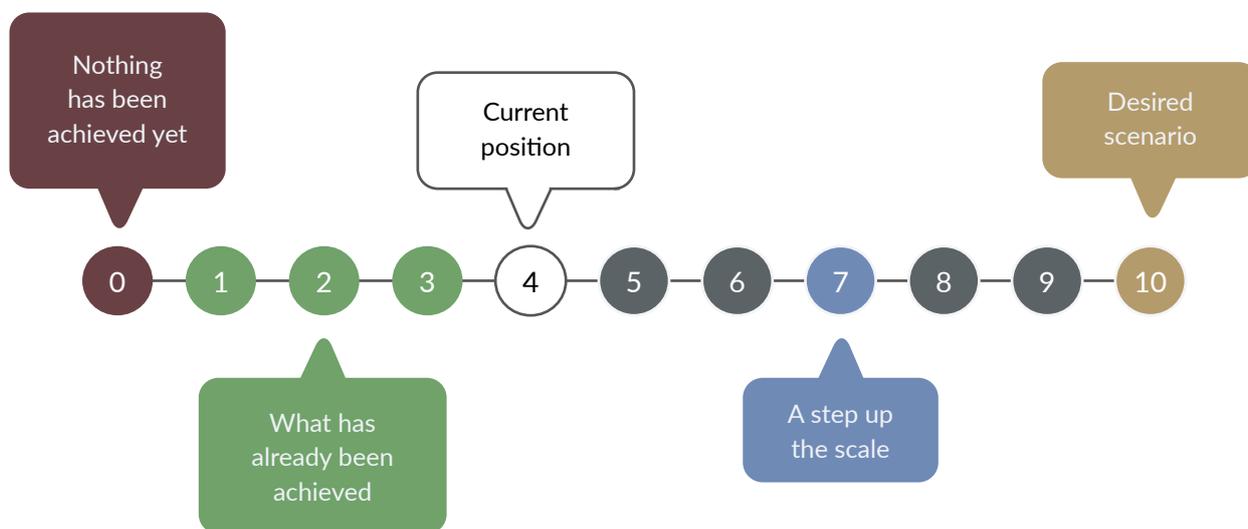
When we want to improve our lives, it is easy to focus on what is lacking instead of actively taking steps towards a more desirable future. Rather than becoming preoccupied with the problems you face, solution-focused scaling questions ask you to think about your present circumstances, identify goals, think about what you already do well, and monitor your progress on simple scales ranging from 0 (least desirable scenario) to 10 (most desirable scenario).

The four scales in this exercise will help you think about your goals in terms of 1) success, 2) motivation, 3) confidence, and 4) independence. These four areas are important for achieving the goals you set for yourself.

Solution-focused scaling questions will also help you:

- Identify what you do well
- Highlight the progress you have already made
- Recognize the resources that will help you reach your goals
- Feel confident, determined, and motivated.

Below is a visualization of the steps involved in solution-focused scaling:



Before you begin: Identifying your goal

Before you begin, take some time to think of something you would like to change. Perhaps an area that is not going as well as you would like or a goal you have not yet achieved.

This could be related to any aspect of your life, including relationships, finances, or your career, among many others. You might want to change your career or improve your performance at work or college. Perhaps you wish to work on your communication skills or deal more effectively with problems.



When you have a goal in mind, write it down in the space below.

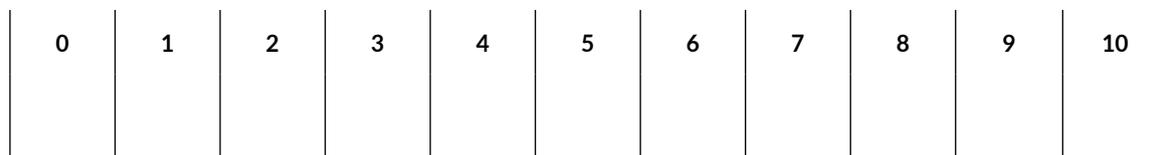
Scale 1: The Success Scale

Now that you have a goal in mind, it is time to look at the first scale. The following questions will help you think about where you are in relation to achieving your goal, what you have already achieved, and what steps will help you move closer to your goal.

This scale will also help you consider past successes and monitor your progress to increase your likelihood of reaching your desired outcome. With your chosen goal in mind, we can start answering the questions of the success scale.

Step 1: Where are you currently on the success scale?

Below is a scale ranging from 0-10, where 0 represents the situation in which nothing has been accomplished yet, and 10 represents the most desired level of success. Regarding your current success in relation to your goal, where would you say you are right now? Use the scale below to record your current rating.



(Nothing has been achieved yet)

(I have reached the desired scenario)

Step 2: Identifying what is working well for you

Now, it is time to look at actions that you feel are helping you reach your desired outcome. Take some time to consider the following questions and write your responses in the spaces provided.



What actions are currently working well for you?

What can you do more of because it works?

Step 3: Examining earlier success

In this step, you will think about what has worked well for you in the past. With your chosen goal in mind, take some time to consider the following questions and write your responses in the spaces provided.

Consider your current point on the success scale (step 1). What helped you to reach that point?



What is different between then and now?

Step 4: Visualizing a higher position on the scale

In this step, you will imagine a future where you are higher on the scale and closer to your desired outcome. Take some time to consider the following questions and write your responses in the spaces provided.

How might things be different if you were higher on the scale?

What will being higher on the scale help you achieve?



Step 5: Taking action

Now, it is time to think about the next small steps you can take to move up the scale. There is no pressure here for you to get to your desired outcome immediately. Even moving up the scale by one point is a step in the right direction. Consider the following questions and write your responses in the spaces provided.

What small steps will you take to begin moving up the scale?

How will you know that you have moved up the scale?

Scale 2: The Motivation Scale

One of the biggest obstacles to reaching your goals is a lack of motivation. Motivation is the key, but cultivating it is not always easy. Motivation drives you toward a goal, and without it, you are unlikely to take the steps that will help you move forward.

This scale will help you think about your current motivation to achieve your goal, actions that helped you feel more motivated in the past, and activities that can help when your motivation is low.



Step 1: Where are you currently on the motivation scale?

Below is a scale ranging from 0-10, where 1 indicates you are not motivated and 10 indicates that you are highly motivated to do whatever it takes to achieve your desired outcome.

With your chosen goal in mind, how motivated do you currently feel? Use the scale below to record your rating.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
(I am not motivated at all)					(I am highly motivated)					

Step 2: Identifying what is working well for you

Let's look at what is already working for you. Take some time to consider the following questions and write your responses in the spaces provided.

In terms of motivation, what actions are currently working well for you?

What can you do more of because it works?



Step 3: Examining earlier success

When we decide to pursue a goal, in the beginning, we are willing to do whatever it takes to reach this goal, only to find our motivation begins to dwindle. In this step, you will think about what has motivated you to work towards your goal in the past. Take some time to consider the following questions and write your responses in the spaces provided.

Consider the point where you currently are on the motivation scale (step 1). What helped you to reach that point?

What is different between then and now?

Step 4: Visualizing a higher position on the scale

In this step, you will think about what might happen if you were higher on the motivation scale. With your goal in mind, take some time to consider the following questions and write your responses in the spaces provided.



How might things be different if you were higher on the scale?

What will being higher on the scale help you achieve?

Step 5: Taking action

Now think about what you can do to move up the scale and increase your motivation to work towards your goal. Remember, you do not need to reach your desired motivation level immediately. Even moving up the scale by one point is great progress.

Take some time to consider the following questions and write your responses in the spaces provided.

What small steps will you take to begin moving up the motivation scale?



How will you know that you have moved up the scale?

Scale 3: The Confidence Scale

Confidence in your abilities to achieve the goals you set is important. When you have confidence that you can accomplish something, it encourages you to take action.

The confidence scale will help you examine your confidence to reach the desired outcome. Becoming more confident will also improve your motivation and your belief in your abilities, and it will help you move higher up the success scale.

Step 1: Where are you currently on the confidence scale?

Below is a scale ranging from 0-10, where 0 represents a complete lack of confidence and 10 indicates you are extremely confident in your ability to reach your goal. With your chosen goal in mind, where would you say you are right now on this scale? Use the scale below to record your current rating.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
(I have no confidence at all)					(I am extremely confident I can achieve this)					

Step 2: Identifying what is working well for you

Look at actions that you feel are helping you feel more confident. Take some time to consider the following questions and write your responses in the spaces provided.



In terms of confidence, what actions are currently working well for you?

What can you do more of because it works?

Step 3: Examining earlier success

Now think about what has worked for you in the past. Take some time to consider the following questions and, with your goal in mind, write your responses in the spaces provided.

Consider your point on the confidence scale (step 1). What helped you to reach that point?



What is different between then and now?

Step 4: Visualizing a higher position on the scale

In this step, you will imagine yourself higher on the confidence scale. Take some time to consider the following questions and write your responses in the spaces provided.

How might things be different if you were higher on the confidence scale?

What will being higher on the scale help you achieve?



Step 5: Taking action

Now think about the steps you can take to move higher up the confidence scale. Again, there is no pressure here, and moving up the scale even by one point is a step in the right direction. Take some time to consider the following questions and write your responses in the spaces provided.

What small steps will you take to begin moving up the confidence scale?

How will you know that you have moved up the scale?

Scale 4: The Independence Scale

This scale examines your ability to make and carry out actions and decisions to help you achieve your goal. The independence scale can also help you feel more in control and self-sufficient, take responsibility for your progress, and feel more confident in your abilities.

Step 1: Where are you currently on the independence scale?

Below is a scale ranging from 0-10, where 0 indicates that you do not know how to move forward and that you need assistance from others, and 10 indicates that you know exactly how to proceed and do not need



help from others. Where would you say you are right now on this scale? Use the scale below to record your current rating.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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(I do not know how to move forward, and I need help)

(I know how I can proceed, and I do not need help)

Step 2: Identifying what is working well for you

Let's examine actions that are currently helping you achieve independence and self-sufficiency. Take some time to read over the following questions and write your responses in the spaces provided.

In terms of independence, what actions are currently working well for you?

What can you do more of because it works?



Step 3: Examining earlier success

Now think about your earlier successes in this area and actions that have worked for you in the past. With your goal in mind, take some time to consider the following questions and write your responses in the spaces provided.

Consider your point on the independence scale (step 1). What helped you to reach that point?

What is different between then and now?

Step 4: Visualizing a higher position on the independence scale

In this step, visualize a future where you are higher on the independence scale. Take some time to consider the following questions and, with your goal in mind, write your responses in the spaces provided.

How might things be different if you were higher on the scale?



What will being higher on the scale help you achieve?

Step 5: Taking action

In this step, think about what steps you can take to move higher up the independence scale. Remember, you do not need to rush to attain your desired situation. Even moving up the scale by one point is great progress. Take some time to consider the following questions and write your responses in the spaces provided.

What small steps will you take to begin moving up the scale?

How will you know that you have moved up the independence scale?



Reflection Questions

- After completing this exercise, where would you say you are right now on a scale of 0-10 in achieving your goal?
- What specific actions have helped you reach this point?
- What actions or behaviors did not work as well as expected?
- In what ways did you find this exercise helpful?
- How will you use what you have learned to approach your goals in the future?