

SOLVED CARDS

**A Solution-Focused
Coaching Process**



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SOLVED Cards Guide

Solution-Focused Method

Thank you for purchasing SOLVED Cards!

This is the first step toward finding the solutions you are looking for – with the resources that are already inside of you.

How do you use your new deck of wisdom?

Whether you're using the SOLVED Method to find solutions to your individual hurdles or using them to help navigate opportunities within a group of coworkers, these cards are here to help answer your questions and map out your quest.

Before diving in, watch the instructional videos at mikecardus.com/SOLVED, or keep skimming through this booklet to find the right how-to steps, dependent on your group size. Then, use the cards as you see fit to solve problems for yourself, your coworkers, or your group. (Maybe the world? Let us know.)

What Is Solution-Focused?

SOLVED Cards are built upon the Solution-Focused philosophy. This approach values simplicity in language while aiming to discover what works in a given situation – simply and practically. The focus on what's wanted, what's going well, and what true practical progress looks like helps lead individuals and organizations toward positive, pragmatic solutions.

You Should Assume:

- Problems don't equal solutions – solutions equal solutions.
- If something is working, do more of it. If something isn't working, do less of it.
- The client is the expert. Period.
- Looking back, there was a time when this particular hurdle wasn't a problem – now, the focus is on the present.
- Organizations, teams, and people operate within systems; small changes in one part yield unexpected changes in others.
- It's of the utmost importance that the solution to the problem be your own.

The value in this method is that by focusing on what you want the solution to be, as opposed to focusing solely on the problem at hand, you can then put your energy and focus into developing action-oriented steps toward the solution. By now, the problem is known and acknowledged; the solution can be found from examining what you know, what resources you have, and what else you need in order to solve your problems.

“The Solution-Focused approach is not an exercise in positive thinking and hiding from problems. It is about purposeful thinking to better understand what we need to do to make changes, and then actually doing it.”

- Alan Kay

Fry the Monkeys: Create a Solution

What Is SOLVED?

SOLVED is an acronym for a process of solution-finding. While using the cards, you can choose to use them in the SOLVED order – initially suggested – or you can choose to use them randomly. Sometimes, a random question can shake us out of our psychological inertia, and we can rediscover ideas that didn't seem right at the time but are applicable now.

“It is the client who owns the problem and the solution. My job is to create a relationship in which the client can get help. It is not my job to take the client's problems onto my own shoulders, nor is it my job to offer advice and solutions in a situation that I do not live in myself.”

- Edgar Schein

(S)ituation

Every solution comes from first defining the situation; taking time to discover what is happening and what you would like to have happen. This step is all about opening the discussion and listening. Listen to the person being coached – the Coachee – and have them frame the situation in a way that is most useful for them. It is useful because the Coachee understands the situation within their context, and having them express an understanding in their own words is the first step in their development.

(O)bservation

Coachees take the role of an observer and, thus, are able to separate themselves from the problem to think about how others who are close to them would describe the solution. This is a powerful technique in solution-finding, as this step allows the Coachees to explore their solutions from unique and different perspectives to possibly move them toward discovering resources they had forgotten.

(L)evel

At this point, Coachees discover their progress. Oftentimes, people are very surprised to see how far they've come; these questions illustrate success and then guide the path for the Coachee to determine next steps. This use of leveling questions leads to progress.

(V)alidation

People are often unable to recognize the success that they've achieved up to this point, and the validation questions enable them to see this progress. In order to become a master of what's "right," the Coachee must find the things that are going "right" or well for them.

(E)xception

There is always an exception to the rule. Just like there was always a time when the Coachees were already using the solution they are actively seeking – even if only a bit. Finding that exception and determining what they were doing, how it was done, and ways to do more of it moves the Coachees into a place of success and innovation. These questions ask the Coachees to find and determine what made those exceptions work and to understand what about them can be used again.

(D)ecision & Direction

The path to solutions is built upon the layering of small steps – steps that are small enough where progress can be built while still taking time to see each level as a learning tool. These questions help Coachees take what they already know and use their existing resources to make small steps that can be looked at and built upon to move closer to the solution.

How to Use SOLVED Cards

The options in the included manuals – pertaining to individuals, pairs, and teams – are just some possible uses to get the most out of your new deck.

However, you are encouraged to be creative and try your own ideas on for size.

Follow-Up

Follow-up should include regularly scheduled team meetings to discuss progress, learn from experience, and modify direction – as necessary. Problems can only truly be solved with work.

SOLVED • Train the Trainer

Need more Mike? Hire Mike Cardus to lead a SOLVED workshop for your organization, your team, your managers, your staff, or even yourself. There, he can teach your team how to use the SOLVED Method to quickly innovate – and continually improve – the organization.

The solutions are endless.

Contact

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INDIVIDUALS AND PAIRS

SOLVED • Individuals

(One person works alone)

Time Frame

30-45 minutes

Guidelines

- ✓ Grab your deck of SOLVED Cards, and find a quiet place where you can sit – alone – for about 45 minutes.
- ✓ As clearly and distinctly as you can, write out the problem for which you are seeking clarity.
- ✓ Sort the SOLVED Cards into common colors and place them face down in piles from left to right so that the cards are question-side down in piles that spell out S-O-L-V-E-D.
- ✓ Starting with the S pile, select any card from the top of your random selection.
- ✓ Read it and then take some time to think through your response and/or speak it aloud.
- ✓ Next, select a card from the O pile, and repeat the above step. Repeat for all piles – in order.
- ✓ Once you arrive at the D pile, write down your Decisions and Directions.
- ✓ Repeat if necessary.

SOLVED • Pairs

(Two people work together)

Time Frame

30-60 minutes

Guidelines

- ✓ Determine who wants to find a solution to a problem.
- ✓ The person looking for the solution is the Coachee, while the other acts as the Coach.

Phase 1 • Preparing

Activities

- The Coachee takes some time to think about the solution desired.
- The Coach then determines how best to help the Coachee.

Listening & Speaking Rules

- Come to an agreement on both confidentiality and the ways to best help each other.

Phase 2 • Presenting

Activities

- The Coachee speaks about how they could be best coached and what they are looking to gain from the time together.

Listening & Speaking Rules

- Agreement based on confidentiality and cordiality continues to be observed.

Phase 3 • SOLVED CARDS

Activities

- The Coach chooses two or three questions from each of the SOLVED steps before moving on to the next letter, asking two to three questions in a sequence.

Listening & Speaking Rules

- The Coach asks a question from the SOLVED Card and then may also ask a follow-up question of their own in order to gain more detail or clarity.
- At this point, there is no advice, judgment, or suggestion offered by either party.
- Respect the helping relationship and confidentiality.
- Keep the emphasis on the questions and progress made through the SOLVED Method.

Phase 4 • Admiration

Activities

- The Coach tells the Coachee what they admire and what impressed them from the conversation they just had.

Listening & Speaking Rules

- The Coachee says thank you.

Phase 5 • Reflecting

Activities

- The Coach then offers some ideas based upon the discussion.
- Ideas should be phrased, “I wonder if you have ever tried...” or “Based upon what you have told me, what would happen if...” to keep the dialogue open and moving forward.

Listening & Speaking Rules

- The Coachee listens and tries to determine what is useful based upon the earlier responses and the possible solutions being discussed through the SOLVED Method.

Phase 6 • Completing

Activities

- The Coachee responds to the reflections above, starting with what seems most useful and specifying some next steps on how progress can be measured.

Listening & Speaking Rules

- Only the Coachee speaks.

TEAMS

SOLVED Team • Coaching

(Team works with one Coachee)

Time Frame

30-60 minutes

Guidelines

- ✓ Determine who wants to find a solution to a problem.
- ✓ The person looking for the solution is the Coachee, while the other people will serve as a coaching team.

Phase 1 • Preparing

Activities

- The Coachee takes some time to think about the solution desired.
- The team determines how best to help the Coachee. For example, they could find out how the Coachee wants to be helped, such as being a resource, offering ideas, listening, asking questions, offering helpful advice at the end, or holding the Coachee accountable for their actions.

Listening & Speaking Rules

- Come to an agreement on both confidentiality and the ways to best help each other on the team.
- Confirm a high trust level within your team to use this approach.

Phase 2 • Presenting

Activities

- The Coachee speaks about how they could be best coached and what they are looking to gain from the time together.

Listening & Speaking Rules

- Only the Coachee speaks – the rest of the team listens.

Phase 3 • SOLVED CARDS

Activities

- The team chooses two or three questions from each of the SOLVED steps before moving on to the next letter, asking two to three questions in a sequence.
- It is not necessary for the team to ask questions that build upon a theme. The mere act of asking the questions will move the Coachee closer to a solution.

Listening & Speaking Rules

- A team member asks a question from the SOLVED Card and then may also ask a follow-up question of their own in order to gain more detail or clarity.
- At this point, there is no advice, judgment, or suggestion offered by any party.
- Respect the helping relationship and confidentiality.
- Keep the emphasis on the questions and progress made through the SOLVED Method.

Phase 4 • Admiration

Activities

- Each person on the team shares with the Coachee what they admire and what impressed them from the conversation they just had.

Listening & Speaking Rules

- The Coachee says thank you to each person on the team.

Phase 5 • Reflecting

Activities

- Team members offer some ideas based upon the discussion.
- Ideas should be phrased, “I wonder if you have ever tried...” or “Based upon what you have told me, what would happen if...” to keep the dialogue open and moving forward.

Listening & Speaking Rules

- The Coachee listens and tries to determine what is useful based upon the earlier responses and the possible solutions being discussed through the SOLVED Method.

Phase 6 • Completing

Activities

- The Coachee responds to the reflections above, starting with what seems most useful and specifying some next steps on how progress can be measured.

Listening & Speaking Rules

- Only the Coachee speaks.

SOLVED Team • Group

(The team works together to find a solution)

Time Frame

2-6 hours, depending on the team and the complexity of the solution

Guidelines

- ✓ Prior to – or at – the team meeting, define what the problem is and what the team’s solution meeting will focus on.
- ✓ Examples might be increasing communication between production and sales; decreasing the defects coming from Sector 9; increasing retention of managers, etc.
- ✓ It is highly recommended that the team use a facilitator, or that someone outside of the team serve as one, for this process.

Phase 1 • Preparing

Activities

- The team defines the area in which they wish to find a solution and develop a shared agreement upon the need for an outcome from this meeting.

Listening & Speaking Rules

- Come to an agreement on both confidentiality and the ways to best help each other on the team.
- Confirm a high trust level within your team to use this approach.

Phase 2 • Presenting

Activities

- Each team member briefly shares their view of the problem and what they need to have happen in order for this time to be effective – and what outcome will be satisfactory. This data should be posted on a wall chart so all can see it. The end goal is to create a shared problem statement for what the team wants to solve.

Listening & Speaking Rules

- One person speaks at a time. Information is gathered and updated on a chart page visible to everyone.
- The team continues to look for commonalities and agreements.

Phase 3 • SOLVED CARDS

Activities

- The team chooses two or three questions from each of the SOLVED steps before moving on to the next letter, asking two to three questions in a sequence.
- It is not necessary for the team to ask questions that build upon a theme. The mere act of asking the questions will move the team closer to a solution.

Listening & Speaking Rules

- When one person asks a question, each team member is given a chance to respond. Team members may build upon each other's responses and may ask each other follow-up questions for clarification.
- At this point, there is no advice, judgment, or suggestion offered by any party.
- Keep the emphasis on the questions and progress made through the SOLVED Method.

Phase 4 • Admiration

Activities

- Each person on the team shares with the group as a whole what they admire and what impressed them from the conversation they just had.

Listening & Speaking Rules

- Each team member thanks the others.

Phase 5 • Reflecting

Activities

- Team members offer some ideas based upon the discussion.
- Ideas should be phrased, “I wonder if you have ever tried...” or “Based upon what you have told me, what would happen if...” to keep the dialogue open and moving forward.

Listening & Speaking Rules

- Team members listen and try to determine what is useful based upon the earlier responses and the possible solutions being discussed through the SOLVED Method.

Phase 6 • Completing

Activities

- Each person on the team responds to the previous reflections, starting with what seems most useful to specifying some next steps that address how progress can be measured.
- Based upon the solutions the team discovered, action plans, accountability, and authority of who does what – and when – must be established to go forward.
- This is the part where the team takes the ideas and determines how to make the most from each other and the newly uncovered ideas.

Listening & Speaking Rules

- One person speaks at a time.

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