

## **The Strengths Approach in Human Services**

### STRENGTHS BASED PRACTICE

- Is an approach to people, which is primarily dependent upon positive attitudes about people's dignity, capacities, rights, uniqueness and commonalities
- Emphasises people's ability to be their own agents of change by creating conditions that enable them to control and direct the process of change
- Creates conditions that enable people to identify and mobilise their strengths and capacities in the process of change
- Provides resources in a way that complements people's existing strengths and resources as opposed to compensating for deficits
- Acknowledges and addresses power imbalances between workers and those they works with
- Seeks to identify and address social, personal, cultural, and structural constraints to people's growth, and liberation
- Recognises and acts to address dynamics inherent in organisational practices and structures that are incongruent with strengths based principles and processes

Wayne McCashen 2000

## Two-Day Training Workshop

### Course Dates

**14<sup>th</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup> May**  
**mid-July (TBC)**  
**10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> September**

**Venue: Mercy Congregation Centre**  
**720 Heidelberg Rd, Alphington VIC 3078**

This workshop will be both an introduction to and review of Strengths Based Practice and a chance to practise the processes and techniques

**Day one** will focus on the philosophy of change and the conditions that can both promote or inhibit change and growth occurring. Our role as professionals can be used as a resource to support and assist change in the lives of our clients and each other. Our role as professional can also be used to direct the change process, leaving the client disempowered and unlikely to have truly been invited to express their hopes and wishes.

We explore through discussion and sharing experiences, the constraints to change and liberation from an historic and societal perspective, as well as how our beliefs and attitudes as individuals can inhibit another's growth. This can occur in unintentional ways related to the unexamined impact of conventions, traditions and culture within our selves or our service.

With a greater understanding of the organisational and professional's role in supporting change we take a look at the values and beliefs of Strengths Based Practice and begin to put these into practice. . We use a supportive solution finding exercise, which demonstrates the philosophy of client directed practice. All change in this context is framed within a culture of safety where duty of care is assumed.

**During the second day** we invite participants to look closely at how our conversations work to expose the strengths and resources of clients, again carefully placing the client at the centre of the process. Our words can harm or heal or make no difference, at least we want them to make no difference! Finding out what and who is meaningful to the client or community will give direction to the conversations and hopefully lead to manageable steps toward the clients stated preferences. Engaging the client in his or her own possibilities is the key here

There are many conversation techniques that can assist the uncovering of aspirations, future pictures and motivation levels for clients. Professional resources are added to compliment those of the client, not to compensate for deficits. We continue to practice and experience the transformation possible when we are reverently heard and our preferences are genuinely respected

An important component of the Strengths Approach is the recognition that we are and can all be clients and that our commonalities as human beings is what connects us. We use humour and acceptance of our own life challenges to accompany us on the discovery that self-determination and respect for diversity creates colour and texture in our world.

## **Designed and delivered by Bernadette Glass & Associates**

Bernadette Glass and her associates have been working in the human services field for the past 30 years. Bernadette in particular has been using a Strengths Based Approach to working with people since the late 1980's

Gaining her introduction to the approach whilst working at St Luke's in Bendigo when the approach was being developed and implemented into practice with families, Bernadette has since continued to work and share the Strengths Approach in her work for the past 17 years.

A nursing background equipped Bernadette for understanding how information and control over decisions can be difficult to achieve when professional knowledge seems to limit our sense of self – agency.

Over the past 5 years Bernadette Glass & Associates has delivered training to hundreds of people in the human service sector in Victoria and interstate. A developing feature of the work is the invitation by agencies to provide regular ongoing support for the implementation of the approach. In addition, BGA is providing an increasing amount of team development, supervision and conflict resolution using Strengths Based Solution Focused facilitation.

Bernadette has studied in welfare, facilitation, solution-oriented counselling and workplace assessment and training

She gained her accreditation as a trainer with the National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice, University of Iowa, U.S.A. and has a Certificate 4 in Workplace Training and Assessment

Associates have qualifications in education, facilitation, social work, counselling, family therapy and conflict resolution and have utilised the Strengths Approach for many years in their individual professions.