Skills Demonstrated in the Strength-based, Solution-focused Supervisor/Worker Conference

A. Displaying understanding of the worker's perceptions
A perception is some aspect of a person's self-awareness or awareness of his/her life. Perceptions are holistic; they include a person's thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and experiences. Affirmation of a worker's (or client's) perceptions is similar to reflective listening in form, but does not isolate and focus on the feeling component per se, but on the client's larger awareness.

B. Displaying understanding of the worker's feelings
The supervisor identifies and reflects back to the worker understanding of the feeling element of the worker's message.

C. Facilitating a positive vision of the future
The supervisor invites the worker to suspend focus on the current problem or concern and to consider a time in the future when the problem or concern is resolved. The purpose of this skill is to generate hope and motivation to move toward the positive vision of the future which includes resolution of the problem.

D. Exploring requirements for movement
This skill invites the worker to consider what actions or changes might be taken to achieve some small steps toward positive change. This skill is often used as a follow-up to a scaling question.

E. Greeting
Greeting is the supervisor's acknowledgment of and expression of general interest in the worker. The greeting varies based on the learning/work style of the worker. The greeting would likely be brief for workers who are task-oriented, and extended somewhat for workers who are more relationship oriented.

F. Expressing interest in the worker's needs
This skill involves focused listening, inviting the worker to discuss the need, and an expressed commitment by the supervisor to consider ways to address the worker's need.

G. Reaching for feedback
The supervisor encourages the worker to respond to the supervisor's explanation of the purpose of a meeting; and/or asks for confirmation of a worker's understanding/agreement of or thoughts/feelings about what has been spoken or done.

H. Clarification of purpose
Statement of the supervisor's role/function specifically as it relates to the stated problem or issue at hand. Also includes a simple, non-jargonized statement by the supervisor regarding the general purpose of the meeting/session.

I. Scaling confidence
Scaling questions invite the worker to put her/his observations, impressions, and predictions on a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 being no confidence, and 10 being every confidence. In addition to confidence, scaling can also be used to assess commitment, seriousness of a problem, level of functioning, etc. Scaling questions need to be specific, citing specific times and circumstances. The actual rating or number selected by the worker is simply a reflection of the worker's perception. It is a starting point for discussion and amplification, not debate.

J. Offering feedback
Observations about what the worker has done successfully related to the task at hand and offering suggestions for improvement or future work; offering feedback helps the supervisor and worker in building trust, in reinforcing useful strengths and in identifying requirements for further work.

K. Suggesting/Assigning tasks
The strength-based, solution focused approach to task assignment differs from the more directive approach in that it flows from the collaborative work of the supervisor and worker in assessing the problem and exploring possible solutions. It is not a unilateral action by the supervisor that excludes the worker in the solution-building process.

L. Identifying/Exploring strengths in a problem situation
Under this skill category are several variations which include identifying strengths in a general discussion of the problem; identifying strengths or successes in the context of exploring the worker's past attempts to address the problem (exploring past successes); and identifying specific times when the problem could have occurred, but didn't or was less severe and how the exception to the problem occurred (exploring exceptions).

M. Follow-up question to the positive visioning question
After the worker's initial response to the supervisor's invitation to the worker to consider a positive vision of the future in which the problem is resolved, the supervisor reinforces and amplifies the future vision by asking additional questions about what will be different in the future in regard to feelings, behaviors and the reactions of others.

N. Exploring the rationale for confidence rating
The supervisor asks the worker to explain the rating given on the confidence scaling question (or any scaling question) to generate a fuller understanding of the worker's position and to generate leads to possible pieces of the solution.