

The Power of the Next Small Step: What's the best that could happen?

Rayya Ghul

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Review by Chris Iveson

Rayya Ghul, with *The Power of the Next Small Step*, has pulled off a remarkable achievement: a book that anyone can read with interest and pleasure that also does justice to the post-modern underpinnings of solution focused practice: that theories of causation are less than helpful when it comes to problem-solving and we can influence the world we live in by the way we talk about ourselves within it.

“When you focus on the history of the problem . . . It becomes harder and harder to imagine anything different. . . . When you focus on what works . . . a completely different picture comes into focus. You see the beautiful bird in the tree, and then you see a few more. What you thought were leaves are greenfinches!”

The first third of the book makes the case against traditional problem-solving by puncturing five myths starting with “You have to change before anything else can change” (a myth still clung to even by some SF coaches and therapists). Rayya is a superb teacher (and officially recognised as such) and her skill shows throughout this section by making complex ideas simple without talking down to her less-informed readers. And this is true throughout the book, which goes on to give a very clear overview of SF thinking before getting to the heart of the matter – how to hold a SF ‘conversation’ with yourself.

The skill of putting this ‘self-help’ part of the book together will have come from Rayya’s many years of teaching students how to become SF practitioners. Again she has simplified complex processes, making them accessible to anyone who

chooses to pick up the book and, interestingly, this may be a friend rather than the person struggling with their life: “You may choose to work with a friend . . . (t)here is something powerful about hearing your own answers out loud” – a point which most self-help authors fail to acknowledge.

There is a third role for this book: just as a friend might be recruited to ask the questions so might professionals. Within its covers is a course in SF practice which could be used by a trainer or by a small group of peers wishing to train themselves.

This is a very simple book: no below-the-surface, no behind-the-scenes. It is just as it should be.