

Scaling Questions: Support to Start Change

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What are scaling questions?

Scaling questions are a simple tool that derived from solutions-focused work concerning individual and organisational change. They can easily be applied and aim to help people to

- a) define their goal(s),
- b) become aware of their resources,
- c) define small behavioural steps of what to do next to reach their goal,
- d) become aware of how confident they are to reach the goal.

When to apply?

Scaling questions can be introduced to the practice team after the provision of the benchmark results during the feedback session. If practice team members already have questions concerning "how to reach the next level" during the assessment session, the scaling questions can be introduced then. If not, the scaling questions should be introduced during the feedback session.

What should be clear before you apply them?

Naturally, scaling questions are only helpful if support to start reliable change is needed and wanted.

Practices can differ here even with regard to the same area to change. For example, with regard to Dimension 4, level 4 "*Regular team meetings take place in the organisation to discuss the processes for patient care...*", practice team A, that wants to reach this level, finds it easy to decide and to implement the originally irregular meetings on a regular basis. Nevertheless, practice team B, that also wants to reach this level, finds it very difficult to hold meetings on a regular basis, since they have already tried it and failed. If the team of practice B is interested in some ideas, how to reach this goal, the scaling questions can be useful.

So, at first, please

- a) ask the practice team how confident they are that they will successfully change. If they are very confident, they probably don't need support for change. If they are not very confident (or interested in more reliable change) the scaling questions can be offered.
- b) ask the practice team if they are interested in getting more ideas how to start change or in becoming more confident about their ideas.

The scaling questions: How to apply?

Question 1: Get started

Ask the team to identify an area, where they want to improve and where they are not sure how to do this or not very confident that their ideas will lead to reliable change. Write the area as a title on a paper that possibly every member of the group should be able to see.

Question 2: Set the goal

Ask the team the following questions and write the answers on the upper third of the paper.

- What is there, if XY is perfectly the case?
- Which other tiny little things happen, when the practice is at XY?
- What else could be recognised?
- What else would be done?

Question 3: Define the scale and assessment

Define the scale, by using these or similar sentences: "All the given answers form one end of a scale, the ideal, which gets 10 points (write 10 beneath the answers on the paper). The opposite of this (draw an upright line down to the bottom of the paper) gets absolutely 0 points (write 0 at the end of the line). The opposite means that no part of the ideal is present."

Then, ask the team, where they are on the scale at the moment. Everybody should mark his or her rating on the paper with an X, preferably simultaneously. At the very least they shouldn't influence each other.

Summarise the result: "So, some of you think that you are on ... while others think that you are on..".

Question 4: Look for Resources

Now the team looks for the things which are already there with respect to the goal, the things they are already doing to reach the goal. Ask the group: "What do you already do that you are on X and not on 0? What else? And what else?" You can also ask for exceptions: "What happens, if things are slightly better?"

It is important that the participants really think about what's already there. Write the answers at the sides of the line on the paper.

Question 5: Define small steps and building confidence

The aim here is to define small behavioural steps in what to do next to reach the team's goal. Ask the group: "While looking at what you are already doing; what could you do to reach X+1? What tiny little thing could you do as the very next step in direction of the goal? What can be observed, when we are on X plus 1?" Then, everybody writes down on his own paper what he or she will concretely do, probably within the next two weeks. When this is done, ask the team members to think about how confident they are (on a scale from 0 to 10 where 10 is very confident), that they will actually do what they plan to do (and what could help them to become more confident). Then, everybody tells the others what he/she will do.

Lastly the group agrees when to meet again to evaluate their efforts and to define the next steps.

