NCE Reference Sheet — Theories, Techniques & Discriminators

Theory signatures · skills discriminators · diagnosis durations · assessment numbers · ethics, career & group anchors — bare facts only

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THE EXAMINATION — AT A GLANCE

200 questions: 160 scored + 40 unscored field-test items; 225 minutes of testing inside a 255-minute session. Scored domains: Areas of Clinical Focus 47 items · Counseling Skills and Interventions 48 · Professional Practice and Ethics 19 · Intake, Assessment, and Diagnosis 19 · Treatment Planning 14 · Core Counseling Attributes 13. The result is **pass/fail, decided per exam form** — NBCC sets the cut score form by form (modified Angoff, with equating) and publishes no single passing score, so no pass number appears on this sheet.

THEORIES — THE SIGNATURE MOVE

Theory	Signature
Person-centered	core conditions: empathy, congruence (genuineness), unconditional positive regard
Gestalt	present-moment experiments — the empty chair enacts a dialogue with an unresolved relationship
Adlerian	lifestyle read from early recollections, family constellation, birth order; encouragement is central
REBT	ABC: the activating event, filtered through beliefs, produces the consequence; irrational beliefs are disputed
Cognitive therapy	targets automatic thoughts — fleeting, situation-specific appraisals — tested against evidence
Psychodynamic	free association: the client reports thoughts uncensored
Bowen family systems	triangulation: a tense dyad pulls in a third person; the genogram maps family patterns across generations
Solution-focused (SFBT)	miracle question, scaling questions, exception questions
Motivational interviewing	works with ambivalence — evokes the client's own change talk, rolls with resistance; arguing defends the status quo
Narrative therapy	externalizes the problem — "the person is not the problem" — and re-authors the story from unique outcomes
Reality therapy	WDEP: wants, doing, evaluation, planning — built on choice theory's five basic needs

Anchor	Reference
DBT	a dialectic of acceptance and change; teaches mindfulness and emotion-regulation skills
Systematic desensitization	a graded fear hierarchy paired with relaxation
Social interest (Adler)	belonging plus contribution to the community — the criterion of mental health
Irrational beliefs (REBT)	marked by rigid demandingness ("musts") and awfulizing
Core beliefs (cognitive)	the deepest level — global, rigid views of self, others, and the world

SKILLS & DIAGNOSIS — TELL THEM APART

Skill	Discriminator
Paraphrase	restates the factual content of a single statement
Reflection of feeling	names and returns the emotion underneath the words
Summary	weaves several messages and themes across time — used at transitions and session endings
Confrontation	highlights a discrepancy — between words and behavior, or between two statements
Immediacy	comments on the here-and-now counselor–client interaction itself
Interpretation	supplies an explanation or link beyond the client's current awareness

Diagnosis	Duration discriminator
Brief psychotic	1 day to under 1 month, with full return to premorbid functioning
Schizophreniform	1 to under 6 months
Schizophrenia	at least 6 months, including an active phase
Acute stress disorder	3 days to 1 month after the trauma
PTSD	symptoms persist beyond 1 month
Persistent depressive disorder	at least 2 years in adults; no symptom-free gap over 2 months
Generalized anxiety disorder	6 months of pervasive, hard-to-control worry
Mania	at least 1 week (any duration if hospitalized), with marked impairment or psychotic features

ASSESSMENT, ETHICS, CAREER & GROUP ANCHORS

Assessment	Reference
Standard error of measurement	SEM = SD × √(1 − reliability); test-retest = stability over time
Internal consistency	how well the items within one instrument hang together; split-half compares two halves of a single test
Construct validity	whether scores actually reflect the trait the test claims to measure
Criterion- vs norm-referenced	criterion = a preset standard; norm = a norm group
Percentile anchors	z = −1.00 ≈ 16th percentile · z = +0.50 ≈ 69th · the 50th percentile is the mean · ±1 SD holds about 68% of scores

Item	Reference
Informed consent covers	purposes, goals, risks, benefits, fees, limits of confidentiality — ongoing
Confidentiality's limit	serious, foreseeable harm — act to protect; share the minimum necessary
Acute suicide danger	plan + intent + access to lethal means; isolation; weak protective factors; past attempt = static factor
Holland codes	RIASEC — realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, conventional
Super's rainbow	life roles: child, student, leisurite, citizen, worker, spouse/partner, homemaker, parent
Erikson anchors	trust = infancy · industry = school years · identity = adolescence
Yalom factors	universality — experiences are shared; instillation of hope — witnessing another member improve

WHAT THIS SHEET DOESN'T COVER

- Case conceptualization, treatment-planning practice, and full diagnostic criteria sets — only the duration and discriminator lines most often confused are sampled.
- State licensure rules, NBCC application and fee details, and timed, scored practice under exam conditions.
- An explanation for every answer — why the right answers are right and the wrong ones are wrong.
- A fresh set of questions on every attempt, so practice never repeats itself.

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Examination facts: the NBCC Candidate Handbook (verified in the PassProfessor NCE lane records). Theory, skills, and assessment facts come from the PassProfessor NCE bank's own explanations, stated bare. NBCC publishes no single passing score — NCE results are pass/fail per exam form.

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