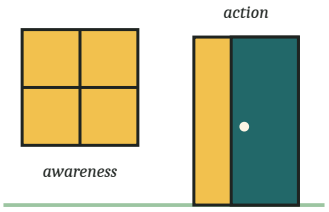
A COUNSELOR'S GUIDE

Windows and Doors



Mild and medium invitations to awareness and action, by sense and by theory

Every client is a whole person: physical, emotional, social, and meaning-making. A **Window** invites awareness: see, notice, name. A **Door** invites action: practice, experience, choose. Awareness is usually where lasting change begins, and new patterns take hold through REPEATED, meaningful experience. Start mild. As a client grows steadier, turn up the dose of both.

TITRATE THE DOSE

START HERE
MILD
Noticing, naming, one tiny step. Seconds to a minute.

AS CAPACITY GROWS
MEDIUM
Staying briefly with emotion, a small experiment, practice between sessions.

BEYOND THIS SHEET
HOT
Deep processing and intense experiential work, within your training.

Client capacity determines dose, not counselor enthusiasm. Change lasts longer when the client chooses it and owns it (Ryan et al., 2011).

IN EVERY INVITATION

ASK "Would you consider trying a little experiment?" "No" is useful information too.

NOTICE Afterward: "What did you notice?" Don't steer toward a hoped-for answer.

RECHECK Was the dose right? Move up only when they're steady.

1 BY SENSE *Five physical senses, two felt senses*

Each sense can open a Window or a Door. Start where the client already has access.

	MILD		MEDIUM	
SENSE	WINDOW	DOOR	WINDOW	DOOR
Sight	"Find something pleasant to look at. What happens inside as you look?"	Put a meaningful photo where you'll see it, and pause on it each morning.	Look at a photo from a harder season. What do you notice in your body?	Picture the next hard moment going well, step by step, then rehearse it.
Sound	"Listen for the farthest sound… now the closest."	Make a three-song calming playlist for the drive home.	Notice how your voice changes when you talk about it.	Say the boundary sentence out loud, at full voice, in session.
Touch	"Notice where your body meets the chair."	Hand on heart when stress rises. Notice what shifts.	Name the stressor and notice where tension gathers. Stay with it for 30 seconds.	Keep a grounding touch going while recalling a mildly upsetting moment.
Taste	One slow sip: "What do you notice? Temperature, flavor?"	A familiar, comforting taste as a daily transition, like the end of the workday.	Track how stress shows up in appetite for one week.	Eat one meal a day slowly, without screens, for a week.
Smell	"Is there a scent that has ever helped you feel safe or at home?"	Carry that scent and breathe it in when you notice tension.	Which scents bring memories back, and what feelings come with them?	Use the safe scent before a planned hard moment, like a difficult meeting.
Inner *interoception*	"What's happening inside right now? Where in your body?"	Make the exhale a little longer than the inhale, three times.	Map your early warning signs as stress rises, from 0 to 10.	Move attention between a tense spot and a calm spot for one minute.
Presence *proprioception*	"Notice your feet on the floor and your back on the chair."	Press your palms into a wall for 10 seconds. Notice your strength.	Notice your posture when you feel small, and when you feel steady.	Rehearse a hard conversation standing, feet planted.

THE RESEARCH Insight is moderately linked to outcome across therapy types (Jennissen et al., 2018). The brain changes through repeated, meaningful experience (Kleim & Jones, 2008; Lane et al., 2015). Somatic approaches use interoception and proprioception directly in treatment (Payne et al., 2015).

Continued on the back →

2 BY THEORY *Whatever your model, it has both*

Every major approach includes a way to build awareness and a way to practice something new.

	MILD		MEDIUM	
APPROACH	WINDOW	DOOR	WINDOW	DOOR
CBT	"What went through your mind just then?"	Try one more balanced thought this week, and notice what happens.	A thought record: situation, thought, feeling, and how strong it was.	A behavioral experiment: test one prediction and record what happens.
DBT	Notice what led up to the reaction.	One distress-tolerance skill, like paced breathing, when distress rises.	A chain analysis, step by step, then check the facts.	Opposite action, once this week, when the urge doesn't fit the facts.
ACT	"What matters most to you here?"	Say "I'm having the thought that…" and notice the distance.	Notice what you avoid, and what avoiding it costs you.	One values-based step this week, with the discomfort along for the ride.
Solution-Focused	The miracle question: "What's the first thing you'd notice?"	Scaling: "You're at a 4. What would a 5 look like?" Try that one thing.	Find exceptions: "When is the problem even a little smaller?"	Deliberately do more of what worked in the exception.
Narrative	Name the problem as separate from the person.	Notice one time this week you stood up to it.	Map the problem's influence on life and relationships.	Write a short letter from the preferred story.
Imago	Name the reactive cycle you two fall into.	One small caring behavior your partner would feel.	Name the early hurt underneath the current frustration.	Practice mirror, validate, empathize on a small issue.
IFS	Recognize the part and what it's protecting.	Pause, ground, and name the part when it shows up.	Get curious: "What is this part afraid would happen?"	Ask the part for a little space, and notice what changes.
Positive Psychology	Notice what's already going well.	Three Good Things: write down three each night for a week.	Identify your signature strengths.	Use a signature strength in a new way each day for a week.

TURN IT UP WHEN

- Mild invitations start to feel easy.
- The client stays within their window of tolerance.
- They begin noticing on their own, between sessions.
- They ask for more.

STEP BACK WHEN

- Distress climbs fast, or the 0–10 rating jumps.
- They go quiet, foggy, or flat.
- Hesitation or a "no" shows up. Honor it.

A technique isn't a Window or a Door by itself. It's what you're INVITING.

THE RESEARCH Clarification (the Window) and mastery (the Door) are separate, research-supported ways people change (Grawe, 1997). Under stress, the thinking brain goes offline first (Arnsten, 2009), so pace invitations within the window of tolerance (Siegel, 2020).

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