



NCE Cheat Sheet - Common Trick Question Strategies

1. Client-Centered Choice:

Choose the option that prioritizes the client's perspective and empowerment over giving advice or directing behavior.

2. Safety First:

When risk is mentioned (suicidality, self-harm, danger), assess and stabilize before insight-building or treatment planning.

3. Least Restrictive Alternative:

Select the intervention that protects the client while minimizing control or intrusion (e.g., outpatient > inpatient unless risk is imminent).

4. Ethics Approach:

Confidentiality, boundaries, dual relationships → Consult supervisor/ethics code and document your decision-making process.

5. Identify the Clinical Theme:

Focus on underlying issues (e.g., mood disorder causing academic issues), not just the surface behavior or storyline.

6. Diagnose by Duration:

Distinguish disorders based on timeline (e.g., GAD = 6 months, PTSD = 1 month, Cyclothymia = 2+ years).

7. Personality Disorders:

Diagnose only when behaviors are rigid, pervasive, and stable over time across contexts.

8. Choose Cautious Diagnosis:

If unsure between two diagnoses, choose the one with less severity or broader criteria until more data is available.

9. Respect Autonomy:

When values conflict, explore the client's values and encourage autonomous decision-making.

10. Match Stage of Change:

Interventions should correspond to the client's stage (e.g., contemplation → explore ambivalence; action → skills training).