Figure and Ground - Clinician dialogue

Guide a collaborative conversation about figure and ground while checking fit and participant choice.

Mental health professionals | 15 minutes

Fictional example: A job application fills Rae's attention while hunger and noise fade into the background.

Invite and obtain permission

Offer: "Would it be useful to explore figure and ground using an ordinary or fictional example? We can adapt it, observe, or stop." Ask what the person wants from the conversation.

Elicit before teaching

Ask: "How does this show up, if at all, in your own words?" Offer this idea tentatively: What becomes prominent depends on the surrounding situation. Ask what fits and what does not.

Guide the task

Draw a foreground concern and place competing demands in the background; change their sizes to show attention. Ask for permission before giving an example. Use this fictional illustration if useful: A job application fills Rae's attention while hunger and noise fade into the background.

Reflect and check accuracy

Reflect only what was offered: "I heard you describe ___. What did I miss?" Ask: What changes when the background is included? Avoid assigning motives or interpreting silence as agreement.

Respond to a mismatch

If the person rejects the frame, say: "Thank you for correcting it. What would be more useful?" Return to their language or choose a different approach.

Close with agency

Ask which observation, question, or support request the person wants to keep. Confirm a manageable ending and appropriate follow-up; do not turn a tentative possibility into a homework obligation.

Reflection

What would tell me to adapt, stop, or seek supervision?

Scope and adaptation

Keep experiments collaborative and low intensity. Chair-based or unfinished-business exploration belongs with appropriately trained clinicians after assessment, with a stop cue and an observing alternative. Do not interpret symbols, recover memories, force body focus, or use cathartic confrontation.

Original AI-assisted educational draft; independent clinical review pending. Version 1.0. Background: Gestalt Therapy: An Introduction. Full source links and scope: library.morethantherapy.org/approaches/resources/GST-A02-3