

Replace Blame With Useful Questions

Attention planning and follow through | Clinicians | 10 to 15 minutes

Explore a missed task without assuming a lack of motivation.

Use when a client reports that a plan did not happen. Begin with curiosity about the sequence and the fit of the plan. The purpose is to find a useful adjustment while keeping the client involved in deciding what matters.

Invite an account

Clinician: "The plan did not happen this week. Can we look at the moment it became hard to start or continue?" Client: "I was just lazy." Clinician: "That is a painful label. What did you notice in the actual situation?"

Identify a testable barrier

Clinician: "Was the next step clear? Were the materials available? Did something else need your attention? What feelings or body needs were present?" If the client is unsure: "We can take one recent example slowly, or choose a different plan."

Offer options with permission

Clinician: "Would you like to try a smaller first step, a visible reminder, or asking for support? We can also question whether this task is the right priority." Client: "The instructions were confusing." Clinician: "Then clarifying them may be more useful than another reminder."

Check ownership

Clinician: "What will you try, and what would tell us it helped? How should we adjust if the same barrier appears?" Invite the client to describe the plan in their own words and record uncertainty honestly.

The barrier hypothesis and the client-chosen experiment