Values versus Goals - Clinician dialogue

Guide a collaborative conversation about values versus goals while checking fit and participant choice.

Mental health professionals | 15 minutes

Fictional example: Avery values learning and has a goal of finishing a course.

Invite and obtain permission

Offer: "Would it be useful to explore values versus goals 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: A value can guide ongoing action while a goal describes a possible milestone. Ask what fits and what does not.

Guide the task

Sort chosen qualities, concrete goals, and external expectations into separate groups. Ask for permission before giving an example. Use this fictional illustration if useful: Avery values learning and has a goal of finishing a course.

Reflect and check accuracy

Reflect only what was offered: "I heard you describe ___. What did I miss?" Ask: Which quality can be expressed even if the milestone is delayed? 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

Values are personally chosen directions, not moral rankings or evidence of worth. Recognize structural barriers, disability access, and culturally varied meanings. Do not turn willingness into exposure to danger, excuse coercion, or prescribe one life path. These original exercises do not constitute a complete ACT protocol.

Original AI-assisted educational draft; independent clinical review pending. Version 1.0. Background: Valuing as a Choice. Full source links and scope: library.morethantherapy.org/recovery/resources/VAL-A01-3