Clinical words for progress notes

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WHAT THE CLIENT SAID

Reported: told you about something, such as a symptom or event.

Stated: said something specific, often followed by a quote.

Described: gave detail about an experience.

Endorsed: said yes to a symptom or item you asked about.

Denied: said no to a symptom or item you asked about. It records the answer and implies no doubt.

Disclosed: shared something personal or sensitive.

Expressed: put a feeling or wish into words.

Acknowledged: agreed that something was true or relevant.

Identified: named something, such as a trigger, goal or coping skill.

Verbalized understanding: said back what was explained, in their own words.

WHAT YOU OBSERVED

Presented as: how the client came across on arrival and through the session.

Observed: saw directly.

Demonstrated: showed a skill or behavior in session.

Displayed: showed an emotion or behavior.

Appeared: use only with the evidence, for example "appeared tired: yawning, eyes closing".

ENGAGEMENT AND ATTITUDE

Engaged, cooperative, open, forthcoming, receptive

Guarded, hesitant, reserved, withdrawn, evasive

Irritable, defensive, hostile

Distracted, restless, fatigued

MOOD AND AFFECT

Mood (their words, in quotes): "low", "stressed", "okay"

Affect: euthymic, dysphoric, anxious, irritable, tearful, flat, blunted, restricted, full range, labile

Fit: congruent or incongruent with mood; appropriate or inappropriate to content

SPEECH AND THOUGHT

Speech: normal rate and volume, rapid, pressured, slow, soft, monotone, minimal

Thought process: linear, goal-directed, circumstantial, tangential, disorganized

Thought content: preoccupied with, ruminating about, no delusions elicited

PROGRESS

Improved, progressing, making gradual progress

Maintained gains, stable, unchanged

Minimal progress, regressed, setback

Goal met, partially met, not met

Consistent with: fits a pattern or finding, without claiming more

RISK

Asked about thoughts of suicide, self-harm and harming others

Denies suicidal ideation, self-harm and homicidal ideation

Reports passive suicidal ideation without plan or intent

Safety plan reviewed, updated or completed

Consulted supervisor; followed agency risk procedure

PLAN

Will continue, will review, will monitor, will reassess

Assigned, scheduled, referred, coordinated with (with consent)

Increase or decrease session frequency

Update treatment plan

SWAP THESE

"Fine" or "good" -> describe mood, affect and what the client said

"Non-compliant" -> what did not happen and the reason given

"Refused" -> "declined"

"Manipulative" or "attention-seeking" -> describe the behavior you saw

"Claims" or "alleges" -> "reports" or "states"

"Patient was in denial" -> what the client said about the problem

"Seemed" with nothing after it -> the evidence you saw

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