Thought content terms and prompts

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THEMES AND PREOCCUPATIONS

Preoccupation: a topic the person keeps coming back to.

Worry: repeated thoughts about possible future problems.

Rumination: repetitive, circular thinking about distress, its causes or its consequences.

Hopelessness: a belief that things will not get better.

Worthlessness: a belief of having no value.

Guilt: thoughts of having done wrong or deserving blame.

Somatic preoccupation: repeated focus on bodily symptoms or illness.

OBSESSIONS, COMPULSIONS AND FEARS

Obsessions: intrusive, unwanted thoughts, images or urges that cause distress and that the person recognizes as their own.

Compulsions: repeated behaviors or mental acts done to reduce distress or prevent a feared outcome.

Phobia: marked fear of a specific object or situation, often with avoidance.

UNUSUAL BELIEFS

Overvalued idea: an unusual belief held strongly, short of delusional certainty.

Magical thinking: a belief that thoughts, words or acts can cause unrelated events.

Ideas of reference: a passing sense that neutral events refer to the person, held less firmly than a delusion.

Paranoid ideation: suspicion of being watched, followed or harmed, held less firmly than a delusion.

DELUSIONS (fixed false beliefs, held despite clear evidence, not explained by the person's culture or faith)

Persecutory: being harmed, followed, spied on or plotted against.

Grandiose: having special powers, wealth, identity or importance.

Referential: neutral events, objects or media carry messages meant for the person.

Somatic: something is wrong with the body, against medical evidence.

Nihilistic: the self, part of the body or the world does not exist or is ending.

Erotomanic: another person, often of higher status, is in love with them.

Jealous: a partner is unfaithful, without good evidence.

Guilt: having committed a terrible wrong or sin.

Thought insertion: thoughts are being put into the mind by an outside force.

Thought withdrawal: thoughts are being taken out of the mind.

Thought broadcasting: others can hear or know the person's thoughts.

Delusions of control: feelings, urges or actions are controlled by an outside force.

For each: note the theme, how firmly it is held, and whether the person acts on it.

RISK (record that you asked, and the answer)

Suicidal ideation: none reported, passive (wishes to be dead, no thoughts of acting), or active (thoughts of ending their life).

If present, record: how often, any plan, intent, access to means, preparation, past attempts, and what the person says keeps them safe.

Self-harm: thoughts or recent acts, method and how often.

Homicidal or violent ideation: none reported, or present with target, plan and intent.

Record what you did next, following your service's risk process.

SAMPLE WRITE-UPS

No unusual content: "Thought content focused on money worries. No delusions, obsessions or phobias elicited. Asked about thoughts of suicide, self-harm and harming others: denies all three."

Passive ideation: "Reports passive thoughts of not wanting to wake up, twice this week. Denies plan or intent. Asked about self-harm: denies. Safety plan reviewed."

Delusional content: "Firmly believes neighbors are recording through the walls. Not open to other explanations. Denies thoughts of harming self or others."

Educational template, not medical or legal advice. Follow your employer and regulator rules.