Thought process terms list

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ORGANIZED THINKING

Linear: ideas follow one another in a clear, direct line.

Goal-directed: answers reach the point of the question.

Logical: conclusions follow from what came before.

Coherent: speech can be followed and understood.

DETOURS AND DRIFT

Circumstantial: many unneeded details and side routes, but the answer reaches the point in the end.

Tangential: moves off the question onto related topics and does not come back to it.

Derailment: a slide from one idea onto an unrelated one; often used as another term for loose associations.

SPEED

Flight of ideas: fast jumps from idea to idea, each loosely linked to the last, usually with rapid speech.

Racing thoughts: the person reports that their thoughts feel too fast. This is their report, so quote it.

Slowed thinking: ideas come slowly, with long pauses before answers.

DISORGANIZED THINKING

Loose associations (loosening of associations): shifts between ideas with no clear link between them.

Illogical: conclusions that do not follow from what was said before.

Incoherent: speech that cannot be followed, even within a sentence.

Word salad: words strung together with no meaningful connection.

INTERRUPTED OR STUCK

Thought blocking: speech stops suddenly mid-thought, and the person may not recall what they were saying.

Perseveration: repeats the same word, phrase or idea after the topic has moved on.

UNUSUAL USE OF WORDS

Clang associations: words chosen for their sound or rhyme instead of their meaning.

Neologisms: invented words, or ordinary words given a private meaning.

Echolalia: repeats the interviewer's words or phrases back.

AMOUNT

Poverty of thought: very few ideas expressed; answers are brief and add little.

Poverty of content: speech of normal length that conveys little information.

HOW TO WRITE IT

Name the pattern, then give one short example from the session.

When nothing unusual is present: "Thought process linear, logical and goal-directed."

When a pattern is present: "Thought process tangential: asked about sleep, moved on to a neighbor's car and did not return to the question."

Note when it changed during the session, and whether redirection helped.

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