

WORKING WITH SILENCE

Silence is not empty. It may hold thought, feeling, protection, connection—or a need for something to change.

1. NOTICE MY RESPONSE

When silence arrives, what happens inside me?

- ☐ I feel pressure to speak
- ☐ I worry the client is stuck
- ☐ I fear I am not helping
- ☐ I become self-conscious
- ☐ I feel calm and present
- ☐ I disconnect or lose focus
- ☐ Something else

What do I notice in my body?

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2. STAY CURIOUS ABOUT THE SILENCE

This silence might hold...

- ☐ reflection or processing
- ☐ emotion without words
- ☐ safety and shared presence
- ☐ uncertainty or confusion
- ☐ fear, shame or protection
- ☐ overwhelm, freeze or disconnection
- ☐ a communication or cultural difference
- ☐ a wish not to speak

I cannot know its meaning from silence alone.

3. WHAT DO I NOTICE?

What was happening just before the silence?

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What do I notice in the client's breathing, posture, expression, movement or connection?

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What am I noticing—and what am I assuming?

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4. AM I STILL WITH THE CLIENT?

Presence may be communicated through...

- ☐ an open, settled posture
- ☐ a warm and attentive expression
- ☐ allowing processing time
- ☐ not staring or demanding eye contact
- ☐ staying emotionally available
- ☐ gently acknowledging the silence

How might the client experience my silence?

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5. WHEN MIGHT I SPEAK?

Consider checking in when the silence feels confusing, prolonged, disconnected, pressured or unsafe.

- ☐ 'We can take some time.'
- ☐ 'What is this quiet like for you?'
- ☐ 'Would you like me to stay with you quietly or offer a question?'
- ☐ 'I'm still here with you.'
- ☐ 'Would it help to pause, ground or move on?'
- ☐ 'I'm noticing a change. How are things for you right now?'

A response is an invitation, not a demand.

6. ACCESS, POWER AND DIFFERENCE

Could processing time, sensory load, language, culture, communication differences, trauma, authority or fear of getting it wrong be shaping this moment?

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What choice or adjustment might support the client?

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7. SAFETY WITHOUT ASSUMPTION

Silence does not confirm either safety or danger. If I am concerned, I can ask clearly and compassionately rather than relying on body language alone.

What may need checking?

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8. BRINGING IT TO SUPERVISION

What felt difficult, meaningful or uncertain?

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Is silence becoming a repeated pattern between us?

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What might this reveal about connection, power, safety or my use of self?

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9. CARRY FORWARD

One thing I want to practise...

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One thing I want permission to leave quiet...

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I do not have to fill every silence.

I can stay alongside the client while we discover what this silence needs.