

Immediacy in Therapy Practice Log

Read the article first. This log accompanies [Using Immediacy in Therapy | Staying With Experience When the Mind Moves On](#) at ThoughtsFromATherapist.com, which explains what immediacy protects, the easy and the harder forms, and how to use it well. Search “using immediacy in therapy” on the site to find it.

For clinicians and supervisees. Immediacy is the process of being deeply attuned to the person in front of us, and when we notice a signal of congruence or dissonance, bringing them back into contact with what surfaced before they move away from it. After a session, log one to three moments where something surfaced. Include the ones we let pass. Leave out names and identifying details. A few words per space is enough.

NOTICE What surfaced	A shift in tone, a tightening in the body, a brief hesitation, a change in breath or gaze. In practice, immediacy is somatic: the body is where the experience is still happening when the language has moved on.
SHORT What kind	Overt dissonance is easy to catch: someone laughing while telling something tragic. Energetic condensing is harder: the person says something, and the soma protects them, sometimes with an almost imperceptible dissociative response. A behavior can interrupt the process, and a relational dynamic can appear between us.
UNDERNEATH The shouldn't	There is commonly a <i>shouldn't</i> under these moments, not always verbalized, that interrupts the emotional state the person was starting to enter. The content varies endlessly. The structure is the same.
WHERE IT LANDS Four openings	When emotional experience is present but unnamed. When narrative and physiology diverge. When a behavior interrupts the process, such as a joke at the moment of vulnerability. When a relational dynamic appears in the room, such as a client checking how we are reacting.
NAME IT What I said	Immediacy adds no new content and does not interpret. We stay close to what is observable, avoid assuming meaning, and let the client discover rather than be told. The smaller the intervention, the more space it leaves. Log the exact words. <i>Did I ask permission before pointing to the body?</i> <i>Did I add content, or stay with what was already emerging?</i>

A WORKED EXAMPLE FROM THE ARTICLE

WHAT SURFACED	Someone wants to celebrate something unique about themselves and feels guilty in the same breath.
KIND	Energetic condensing. The expression stops partway.
THE SHOULDN'T	Valuing this about myself is dangerous.
WHAT I SAID	“Guilt showed up there.” Then: “There are two things you want at the same time. You value something about yourself, and there's something dangerous about allowing yourself to value it.”
WHAT OPENED	A meta layer, available only after the first was named: “You feel ashamed that you feel embarrassed about something you'd rather just have acceptance for.”

Clients don't usually need help telling their story. They need support in staying with the parts of the story that are still alive in them.

Moments from the session

One moment per pair of rows. Check the kind, then log what I said word for word. No names or identifying details.

MOMENT ONE

What surfaced

Tone, breath, posture, gaze, a pause. What was the client saying when it happened?

WHAT I NOTICED

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Overt dissonance (a laugh over something tragic) | ☐ Energetic condensing (the soma protects them) |
| ☐ A behavior interrupting the process | ☐ A relational dynamic between us |

MOMENT ONE

What happened next

WHAT THE SYSTEM DID NEXT (SUMMARIZED, JOKED, MOVED FORWARD, CHECKED MY REACTION)

THE SHOULDN'T I SUSPECT UNDERNEATH

WHAT I SAID, WORD FOR WORD

WHAT BECAME AVAILABLE, OR WHAT CLOSED

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ I asked permission first | ☐ Permission was already in place |
| ☐ I did not ask | |

MOMENT TWO

What surfaced

Tone, breath, posture, gaze, a pause. What was the client saying when it happened?

WHAT I NOTICED

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Overt dissonance (a laugh over something tragic) | ☐ Energetic condensing (the soma protects them) |
| ☐ A behavior interrupting the process | ☐ A relational dynamic between us |

MOMENT TWO

What happened next

WHAT THE SYSTEM DID NEXT (SUMMARIZED, JOKED, MOVED FORWARD, CHECKED MY REACTION)

THE SHOULDN'T I SUSPECT UNDERNEATH

WHAT I SAID, WORD FOR WORD

WHAT BECAME AVAILABLE, OR WHAT CLOSED

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ I asked permission first | ☐ Permission was already in place |
| ☐ I did not ask | |

A third moment, and the session as a whole

Log a third moment if there was one, then look back across the hour.

MOMENT THREE

What surfaced

Tone, breath, posture, gaze, a pause. What was the client saying when it happened?

WHAT I NOTICED

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Overt dissonance (a laugh over something tragic) | ☐ Energetic condensing (the soma protects them) |
| ☐ A behavior interrupting the process | ☐ A relational dynamic between us |

MOMENT THREE

What happened next

WHAT THE SYSTEM DID NEXT (SUMMARIZED, JOKED, MOVED FORWARD, CHECKED MY REACTION)

THE SHOULDN'T I SUSPECT UNDERNEATH

WHAT I SAID, WORD FOR WORD

WHAT BECAME AVAILABLE, OR WHAT CLOSED

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ I asked permission first | ☐ Permission was already in place |
| ☐ I did not ask | |

WHERE I ADDED CONTENT

An interpretation, a question that moved us away, a reframe offered before the experience had finished arriving.

WHERE I LET A MOMENT CLOSE FOR MY OWN COMFORT

The system reorganized, the client kept talking, and I let it go. What was I protecting in myself?

PERMISSION

Many clients find immediacy too forward at first. Asking permission is an intervention in itself; it shows we respect their boundaries.

WITH WHOM DO I NEED TO ASK BEFORE POINTING OUT WHAT THEIR BODY IS SAYING?
