

BEYOND THE VISIBLE

A visual reflection guide for what behaviour may be carrying

What we observe is real—but incomplete. A change in tone, pace, silence or action can be a doorway into someone's experience. Sawubona listening makes room for the person to name their own meaning.

WHAT OTHERS CAN NOTICE

VISIBLE SIGNALS

Observation, not conclusion

Words

Tone

Pace

Silence

Action

Distance

Notice gently. Stay open.

ASK

DON'T ASSUME

WHAT MAY BE PRESENT

INNER EXPERIENCE

Only the person can say what fits

Body signals

Feelings

Needs

Values

Beliefs & stories

Pressure & hope

Meaning belongs to the person.

Behaviour is information—not identity.

THREE CONDITIONS THAT HELP PEOPLE GO DEEPER

1 NOTICE

Can I sense what is happening in my body, energy or attention—without rushing to explain it?

2 FIND LANGUAGE

Can I express it with a feeling word, image, colour, object or metaphor?

3 FEEL SAFE ENOUGH

Do I have choice, trust and permission to share only what I want, at my own pace?

THE SAWUBONA STANCE

I see you. I hear you. You matter.

The aim is not to uncover a hidden truth. It is to help the person explore their own experience—in their words, at their pace.

THE IMAGE DOORWAY

A simple, person-led practice for reflection and conversation

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Offer a varied set of images, objects or cards. Make it clear there is no right choice, sharing is optional, and the person may stop at any time.

A GENTLE WAY IN

Allow around 10 minutes • slow down • leave room for silence

1

INVITE

"Would an image, object or metaphor help us explore this?"

2

CHOOSE

"Which one fits something about this moment?"

3

DESCRIBE

"What do you notice first? What else stands out?"

4

CONNECT

"Where does this touch your experience?"

5

NAME

"What feeling, need, value or tension is present?"

6

SUPPORT

"What would feel useful now: listening, a pause, thinking together, or other support?"



THE MEANING BELONGS TO THE PERSON

Do not decode the image, label the person or tell them what their choice means. Ask; don't interpret. Reflect; don't diagnose.

LANGUAGE THAT KEEPS THE PERSON IN THE LEAD

TRY

- ✓ "What does this mean to you?"
- ✓ "Have I understood that?"
- ✓ "Would you like to say more?"
- ✓ "What do you need from me now?"

AVOID

- ✗ "That image means..."
- ✗ "You chose it because..."
- ✗ "What you should do is..."
- ✗ Pressing for details or disclosure.

BOUNDARIES & SAFETY

This is a reflective listening prompt—not a clinical assessment or a way to infer trauma, personality, risk or subconscious meaning. Respect privacy within safeguarding limits.

Immediate danger: 999 or A&E • Urgent mental-health help in England: NHS 111 • Samaritans: 116 123

CLOSE WELL Summarise what you heard, thank the person, and agree one next step—or no step for now.

MY / OUR NEXT STEP