SUMMIT
STUDY GUIDES

NCE

Diagnostic Assessment

Week 3 Checkpoint

40 Questions • 45 Minutes

Scored by the six NCE content domains • Original practice questions

Find your weak spots, then study the chapters that matter most

Summit Study Guides
summitstudyguides.com

SUMMIT
STUDY GUIDES

Copyright © 2026 Summit Study Guides. All rights reserved.

This practice material is licensed for the personal study use of the purchaser. No part of it may be copied, reproduced, shared, resold, uploaded to any website or file-sharing service, or used to train or build any product without prior written permission from Summit Study Guides. Brief quotations for review purposes are permitted with attribution.

Trademark Notice

NCE and National Counselor Examination are registered trademarks of the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC). Summit Study Guides is an independent publisher and is not affiliated with, sponsored by or endorsed by NBCC or the Center for Credentialing & Education (CCE). The questions in this material are original practice items written to reflect the published NCE content outline; they are not actual exam questions and do not come from any NBCC examination.

Disclaimer

This material is provided for educational and exam-preparation purposes only. It is not clinical, legal or professional advice and should not be relied on for decisions about real clients. Ethics codes, diagnostic criteria, laws and regulations change and vary by jurisdiction. The content was reviewed for accuracy as of October 2026, but no warranty of any kind is made as to its completeness, accuracy or continued currency.

Using these practice questions does not guarantee that you will pass the NCE or any other examination. By using this material, you agree that Summit Study Guides and its authors are not liable for any loss, damage or outcome, direct or indirect, arising from its use, including from any errors, omissions or inaccuracies.

How to Use This Material

Take this assessment in one sitting with a 45-minute timer, choosing the single BEST answer for each question. Then score it with the separate answer key and fill in the Weakness Map at the end of the key: count your correct answers in each NCE domain, and study the domains marked Focus first or Review before the others. The interactive version on the Diagnostic page of the NCE bonus site scores your Weakness Map automatically.

NCE Week 3 Checkpoint

40 questions • 45 minutes • Answer key and Weakness Map in the separate Answer Key file

1. A former client's attorney requests the client's raw MMPI-3 item responses and score sheets, and the client has signed an authorization. No court order is involved. According to the ACA Code of Ethics, what should the counselor do?

- **A.** Release the raw data only to a professional the counselor recognizes as qualified
- **B.** Release the raw data directly to the attorney, since the client has given consent
- **C.** Release the raw data to anyone the client names, provided consent is in writing
- **D.** Refuse to release any assessment information under all circumstances

2. Elena, 36, in early recovery from alcohol use disorder, wants a mutual-help group but strongly objects to the spiritual language and 'higher power' concept of 12-step programs. Which referral best fits her preferences?

- **A.** SMART Recovery
- **B.** Narcotics Anonymous
- **C.** Al-Anon
- **D.** Celebrate Recovery

3. Marcus, 38, says, "My dad never came to a single one of my games. Now he wants to be at every one of my son's games." Which counselor response best illustrates additive empathy?

- **A.** Your dad missed all of your games growing up, and now he wants to be involved with every one of your son's games.
- **B.** It's painful to watch him give your son what you wanted from him, and part of you may still be hoping for it.
- **C.** Why do you think your dad wasn't there for you back when you were playing?
- **D.** A lot of grandparents try to make up for lost time when their grandchildren come along.

4. Counselor Mia, 42, notices a surge of irritation whenever her client Tom, 58, interrupts her, a pattern that reminds her of her late father. Tom has made steady progress and has not commented on the dynamic. What should Mia do FIRST?

- **A.** Explore her reaction in supervision or consultation to separate her history from Tom's behavior
- **B.** Use immediacy to point out Tom's frequent interrupting and how it is affecting their working relationship
- **C.** Disclose her family history to Tom so the reaction does not remain hidden between them
- **D.** Refer Tom to a colleague because the reaction signals that her objectivity is impaired

5. What is the most common psychometric criticism of projective techniques such as the TAT and human figure drawings?

- **A.** Their purpose is so transparent that clients can easily fake responses
- **B.** They require a high reading level, limiting their use with children
- **C.** They provide only norm-referenced scores, which limits clinical insight
- **D.** Subjective scoring yields weaker reliability and validity evidence

6. Which set of activities best represents the core functions of case management?

- **A.** Screening, test administration, interpretation, and reporting
- **B.** Assessment, planning, linking, monitoring, and advocacy
- **C.** Rapport building, exploration, insight, and termination
- **D.** Intake, diagnosis, individual therapy, and discharge

7. A graduate student studying attitudes toward counseling stands outside a shopping mall and approaches passersby until she has surveyed exactly 50 men and 50 women. Which sampling method is she using?

- **A.** Stratified random sampling
- **B.** Systematic sampling
- **C.** Quota sampling
- **D.** Convenience sampling with random selection

8. Mei, 29, had a miscarriage at 10 weeks. Her coworkers did not acknowledge it, her manager denied her request for time off, and a relative told her, "At least it was early." She feels she has no right to grieve. Mei's experience is best described as:

- **A.** Anticipatory grief
- **B.** Disenfranchised grief
- **C.** Ambiguous loss
- **D.** Prolonged grief

9. Carla, 28, has a moderate intellectual developmental disorder, and her sister is her court-appointed legal guardian. A day program asks Carla's counselor for information about her treatment goals. How should the counselor proceed?

- **A.** Obtain the guardian's permission without discussing it with Carla
- **B.** Release the information, since the day program provides her care
- **C.** Seek the guardian's permission and inform Carla at her level
- **D.** Obtain Carla's signature alone, since she is legally an adult

10. Priya, 30, rarely socializes and works remotely. She tells her counselor she wishes she had close friends, but she declines invitations because she is certain others will find her inadequate and ridicule her. This pattern has been present since her teens. Which personality disorder best fits?

- **A.** Avoidant personality disorder
- **B.** Dependent personality disorder
- **C.** Schizotypal personality disorder
- **D.** Schizoid personality disorder

11. Which symptom requirement must be met for a DSM-5-TR diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder?

- **A.** Two of three social-communication deficits and two of four restricted, repetitive behaviors
- **B.** Two of three social-communication deficits and one of four restricted, repetitive behaviors
- **C.** All three social-communication deficits and one of four restricted, repetitive behaviors
- **D.** All three social-communication deficits and two of four restricted, repetitive behaviors

12. Which change was made by the 2024 final rule revising 42 CFR Part 2 to better align it with HIPAA?

- **A.** Part 2 records may be used in criminal proceedings against a patient with a standard subpoena
- **B.** Patients may sign a single consent covering all future uses and disclosures for treatment, payment, and health care operations
- **C.** Part 2 no longer applies to federally assisted programs that are also HIPAA covered entities, which now follow the HIPAA Privacy Rule alone
- **D.** Patient consent is no longer required for any disclosure to a HIPAA covered entity

13. Tobias, 36, reports persistent thoughts of killing his brother over an inheritance dispute and admits he has driven past his brother's house with a knife in the car. He agrees he is not safe and is willing to be voluntarily admitted to a psychiatric unit today. In most duty-to-protect jurisdictions, which action is most appropriate?

- **A.** Seek involuntary commitment, because voluntary admission is inadequate
- **B.** Arrange the voluntary admission, which can satisfy the duty to protect
- **C.** Release Tobias with a safety plan and a session early the next morning
- **D.** Warn the brother, then allow Tobias to drive himself home afterward

14. Carla says that the more she reminds and lectures her husband, Ken, about his drinking, the more he drinks and hides alcohol. A counselor following the Mental Research Institute (MRI) brief therapy model would first focus on

- **A.** restructuring the couple's boundaries with their extended families
- **B.** exploring how drinking patterns developed in Ken's family of origin
- **C.** helping Carla and Ken express their underlying feelings congruently
- **D.** interrupting the attempted solution that keeps the problem going

15. Under international and U.S. law, which characteristic distinguishes a refugee from other immigrants?

- **A.** A well-founded fear of persecution on a protected ground
- **B.** A voluntary decision to relocate in search of better economic opportunity
- **C.** Sponsorship by a family member who already holds citizenship or residency
- **D.** Entry into the country without legal authorization or proper documentation

16. A counselor is reviewing research on what accounts for psychotherapy outcomes across different evidence-based treatments. Which conclusion is most consistent with this body of research?

- **A.** The therapeutic alliance is one of the most robust predictors of outcome across treatment approaches
- **B.** Clients improve most when counselors adhere rigidly to a manual regardless of alliance ruptures
- **C.** Specific techniques account for most outcome variance, so the therapeutic relationship matters little
- **D.** Outcomes depend mainly on the counselor's years of experience and academic degree

17. Ava, 10, has worried excessively for the past 7 months about her grades, her parents' safety, and being late. She finds the worry hard to control and has trouble falling asleep, but she has no other associated symptoms such as restlessness, fatigue, or muscle tension. Which statement about a DSM-5-TR diagnosis of generalized anxiety disorder is MOST accurate?

- **A.** GAD can be diagnosed because children need only one associated symptom
- **B.** GAD cannot be diagnosed because children must have symptoms for at least 12 months
- **C.** GAD cannot be diagnosed until separation anxiety disorder has been formally ruled out with a structured interview
- **D.** GAD cannot be diagnosed because three associated symptoms are required at any age

18. Ivey's basic listening sequence (BLS) consists of:

- **A.** questioning, interpretation, self-disclosure, feedback, logical consequences, and summarizing
- **B.** open and closed questions, encouraging, paraphrasing, reflecting feelings, and summarizing
- **C.** attending, confrontation, focusing, reflection of meaning, and directives
- **D.** empathy, genuineness, unconditional positive regard, and immediacy

19. A community agency's intake form requires every new client to describe in writing "the worst thing that has ever happened to you" before meeting a counselor. A counselor reviewing the agency's practices from a trauma-informed perspective would most likely recommend

- **A.** Keeping the question, since early disclosure helps identify trauma-focused needs
- **B.** Making trauma questions optional and asking them within an established relationship
- **C.** Adding a SUD rating so staff can measure distress during the written disclosure
- **D.** Replacing the written question with a detailed verbal account at the front desk

20. Counselor Derek, trained mainly in treating adult anxiety, is asked by his agency to begin seeing transgender adolescents, a population he has never served. What is the most ethical course of action?

- **A.** Accept the cases and rely on general counseling skills that transfer across groups
- **B.** Decline all transgender clients, since he lacks prior experience with this population
- **C.** Obtain relevant education and supervised experience before or while taking such cases
- **D.** Accept the cases after independently reading current literature on gender identity

21. Leah, 36, has worked with an Adlerian counselor to complete a lifestyle assessment, and she now understands how her belief that she must please others drives her overcommitment. Which phase of Adlerian counseling should come next?

- **A.** Analysis and assessment of the family constellation
- **B.** Reorientation, turning insight into new behavior
- **C.** Establishing a collaborative therapeutic relationship
- **D.** Working through the transference neurosis with the counselor

22. Mitchell, Levin, and Krumboltz identified a set of skills that help clients recognize, create, and use chance events as career opportunities. Which set correctly lists these planned happenstance skills?

- **A.** Concern, control, curiosity, confidence, and commitment
- **B.** Curiosity, planfulness, self-efficacy, optimism, and decisiveness
- **C.** Persistence, congruence, flexibility, realism, and specification
- **D.** Curiosity, persistence, flexibility, optimism, and risk taking

23. A counselor receives a friend request on her personal social media account from a current client. Which statement reflects the ACA Code of Ethics?

- **A.** Counselors are prohibited from personal virtual relationships with current clients
- **B.** Accepting is permitted if it is documented as a potentially beneficial interaction
- **C.** Accepting is permitted after discussing the risks with the client in session
- **D.** Accepting is permitted if privacy settings limit what the client can see

24. During her third solution-focused session, Leah, 26, says she has been thinking about ending her life and has stockpiled medication. What should the counselor do FIRST?

- **A.** Ask the miracle question to shift her attention to a preferred future
- **B.** Compliment her for being honest and continue the planned session
- **C.** Conduct a suicide risk assessment and develop a safety plan with Leah
- **D.** Use a scaling question to rate her hopefulness from 0 to 10

25. An employer's HR director calls an employee assistance program (EAP) counselor and asks whether Felix, who was referred after a workplace conflict, has been attending and what he has discussed. Felix signed a release allowing confirmation of attendance only. What may the counselor share?

- **A.** Attendance and session topics, because the employer funds the EAP
- **B.** Confirmation of attendance only, as specified in Felix's release
- **C.** Nothing at all, because EAP services can never be disclosed
- **D.** Attendance plus a brief progress summary, because HR referred him

26. During a six-month evaluation of a workplace stress-management program, the company unexpectedly announces major layoffs in month four. Posttest stress scores rise for all participants. This illustrates which threat to internal validity?

- **A.** Instrumentation
- **B.** Maturation
- **C.** Selection-maturation interaction
- **D.** History

27. Sam, 30, tells his counselor, "There's exactly one right career for me, and if I pick wrong I'll be miserable forever." He has avoided making any career decision for two years. From Krumboltz's social learning perspective, the counselor's MOST appropriate intervention is to:

- **A.** give a comprehensive interest inventory so that the single best-matching occupation can be found
- **B.** assess which developmental tasks of Super's exploration stage he has not yet mastered
- **C.** explore how early parent-child relationships shaped his needs and later occupational orientation
- **D.** identify and challenge this belief that only one career could satisfy him

28. In the phases-of-disaster model used by SAMHSA, community frustration rises and survivors feel abandoned as media attention fades, aid is delayed, and the full extent of losses becomes clear. Which phase does this describe?

- **A.** Reconstruction phase
- **B.** Honeymoon phase
- **C.** Heroic phase
- **D.** Disillusionment phase

29. A counselor whose father died 2 months ago finds herself tearful and distracted during sessions with Beth, a client grieving her own father's death. The counselor notices she is steering sessions toward her own feelings about fathers. What is the MOST appropriate course of action?

- **A.** Seek supervision or consultation to address her reactions and assess her ability to continue
- **B.** Disclose her own loss in detail so that Beth feels less alone and more understood in her grief
- **C.** Immediately terminate with Beth and refer her to another counselor without explanation
- **D.** Continue as usual, since shared experience will deepen her empathy for Beth

30. Nadia, 38, is in systematic desensitization for fear of flying. She has mastered progressive muscle relaxation and helped build a hierarchy. While imagining the second item, she signals that her anxiety has risen sharply. Consistent with Wolpe's procedure, what should the counselor do?

- **A.** Ask her to keep imagining the scene until her anxiety declines on its own
- **B.** Move directly to the top item so counterconditioning happens more quickly
- **C.** Shift to disputing her catastrophic beliefs about the safety of air travel
- **D.** Have her stop imagining the scene and restore deep relaxation before re-presenting it

31. Mr. and Mrs. Okoro rarely disagree openly. Whenever tension builds between them, they both turn their attention to their son's "bad behavior," uniting in concern and discipline. Minuchin would most likely label this rigid triad

- **A.** a stable parent-child coalition
- **B.** emotional cutoff
- **C.** detouring
- **D.** triangulation

32. A solution-focused counselor is working with Ana, 19, who is struggling with college adjustment. Which counselor statement best reflects the presuppositional language characteristic of SFBT?

- **A.** "How long have you been struggling with adjustment?"
- **B.** "If things ever do start getting better at school, what might that look like for you?"
- **C.** "What will you notice about yourself when college starts going better?"
- **D.** "Why do you think college has been so difficult for you?"

33. Jasmine, 29, is being discharged from an emergency department after a suicidal crisis; she is not judged to need hospitalization. Before she leaves, which brief intervention has evidence for reducing subsequent suicidal behavior?

- **A.** Collaboratively developing a written safety plan with follow-up contact
- **B.** Having Jasmine sign a no-suicide contract promising not to harm herself
- **C.** Providing a list of local therapists for her to call when ready
- **D.** Recommending she avoid discussing suicide so as not to reinforce it

34. Ahmed, a school counselor, plans a grief group for fifth graders. Which planning decision is MOST appropriate?

- **A.** Schedule 90-minute sessions so that students have time to process deeply
- **B.** Combine all grade levels so that older students can mentor the younger
- **C.** Obtain parental consent and keep the group small with shorter sessions
- **D.** Run the group without parental notice to protect the students' privacy

35. Tamara, 33, insists she is not nervous about her upcoming custody hearing, but her foot taps rapidly throughout the session. Her Gestalt counselor asks her to tap her foot harder and faster and to notice what she experiences. Which technique is this?

A. Reversal
B. Staying with the feeling
C. Exaggeration
D. Rehearsal

36. While writing her trauma narrative in TF-CBT, Zoe, 13, discloses for the first time that her stepfather, who lives in the home, has also been touching her inappropriately. Her original referral was for a car accident. What should the counselor do?

A. Ask Zoe's mother whether she has noticed anything before deciding to report
B. Gather detailed forensic information from Zoe to confirm the allegation first
C. Continue the narrative and address the new disclosure after the car accident work
D. Report the suspected abuse to child protective services as required by law

37. If a test's reliability coefficient rises while its standard deviation stays the same, what happens to the standard error of measurement?

A. It rises, because more true-score variance adds error
B. It falls, so observed scores track true scores more closely
C. It stays the same, because SEM depends only on the SD
D. It becomes equal to the standard error of estimate

38. Dana, a counseling intern, mostly gives advice to her client Rae, 31. Rae says, "You keep telling me what to do, but you don't get what this is like for me." Dana privately believes she understands Rae well. According to Rogers (1957), which condition for change is most clearly unmet?

A. The counselor being congruent and integrated within the relationship
B. Two persons being in psychological contact with one another
C. The client perceiving, at least minimally, the counselor's empathy
D. The client being in a state of incongruence, vulnerable or anxious

39. A counselor works in an integrated care clinic where all providers use one shared electronic health record. Lucia, 34, discloses in session detailed information about an affair she is concealing from her husband, which is affecting her mood. How should the counselor handle this in the shared record?

A. Record the full details, since every treating provider needs complete information
B. Omit any note for the session so that Lucia's private disclosures stay protected
C. Document what is clinically necessary, leaving out nonessential personal details
D. Ask Lucia's physician whether the information should be entered in the chart

40. A counselor asks Devon, 33, whom he admired growing up, which magazines or TV shows he enjoys, what his favorite story is, what his favorite saying is, and what his earliest memories are. The counselor is MOST likely using:

A. Holland's Self-Directed Search
B. Super's Career Development Inventory
C. Krumboltz's Career Beliefs Inventory
D. Savickas's career construction interview