



accountabili-buddy

— CLARITY. COMMITMENT. FOLLOW THROUGH. —



**REFERENCE
SHEETS**

REFERENCE SHEET 13

FIVE QUESTIONS OF EXPERT ANALYSIS

When an accountability conversation becomes complicated, return to five questions.

These questions prevent unnecessary interpretation, overintervention, and drift away from the actual accountability task.

QUESTION 1

WHAT DO I KNOW?

Identify the facts available now.

Examples:

- Client committed to three applications
- One was submitted
- Two were completed but not sent
- Client had two available work periods
- This is the third week submission has been delayed

Do not include interpretation.

Not:

“Client is afraid of rejection.”

unless the client has directly reported that fear.

Even then, distinguish the report from a proven causal explanation.

QUESTION 2

WHAT AM I INFERRING?

Identify your interpretation separately.

Examples:

"Submission avoidance may be present."

"Perfectionistic standards may be contributing."

"The commitment may exceed current capacity."

"The client may be losing interest."

"The explanation may be incomplete."

The purpose is not to eliminate inference.

Professional accountability requires inference.

The discipline is knowing **when you are doing it**.

QUESTION 3

WHAT DO I STILL NEED TO KNOW?

Do not ask everything that could possibly be relevant.

Ask what would change the accountability decision.

Example:

Client says:

"I did not have time."

Potentially Useful:

"Were there any realistic opportunities during the week?"

Potentially Unnecessary:

"How did you feel every morning?"

The second question may be interesting.

It does not necessarily help distinguish the relevant formulations.

THE DECISION-CHANGING INFORMATION TEST

Before asking a question:

"If I knew the answer, could it change what I recommend next?"

If no, the question may not be necessary.

QUESTION 4**WHAT IS THE ACCOUNTABILITY TASK?**

Identify what this conversation actually needs to accomplish.

Possible tasks:

- Confirm completion
- Clarify a vague commitment
- Understand a miss
- Discriminate between two plausible barriers
- Recalibrate
- Identify a pattern
- Address avoidance
- Reassess goal value
- Restore client ownership
- Correct an ineffective intervention
- Establish the next commitment
- Close a goal
- Maintain a boundary

Do not solve a larger problem than the accountability task requires.

EXAMPLE

Client says:

"I think my fear of criticism comes from how my father treated me."

Possible Accountability Task:

Determine how fear of evaluation is affecting submission and establish the next accountable action.

Not:

Determine whether the client's childhood caused the current psychological response.

The second task exceeds what accountability requires.

QUESTION 5

WHAT IS THE LEAST INTENSIVE RESPONSE THAT WILL ACCOMPLISH IT?

Professional accountability should be proportionate.

If the client gives a sufficient explanation and has a reasonable next plan, do not conduct an unnecessary deeper inquiry.

If one question will distinguish the relevant possibilities, do not ask six.

If one check-in per week provides sufficient accountability, do not increase to two or three without a reason.

If direct observation is sufficient, do not construct a psychological theory.

RESPONSE INTENSITY CAN RANGE FROM:

Minimal Acknowledgment

"Done. Same target next week?"

Clarification

"What counts as complete?"

One Discriminating Question

"Did you genuinely lack time, or was the available time going elsewhere?"

Pattern Challenge

"We have changed the schedule twice and the outcome has stayed the same."

Commitment Redesign

"I think the current target needs recalibration."

Goal Reassessment

"Do you still want this as an active goal?"

Boundary

"That is outside what I should determine in an accountability role."

Use the lowest level that adequately addresses the situation.

COMPLETE EXAMPLE**Client**

"I missed all three workouts again. I think I need three check-ins a week instead of one."

1. What do I know?

- Three workouts were planned
- None occurred

- Client proposes increasing check-in frequency
- This has happened before

2. What am I inferring?

More frequent check-ins may not address the actual barrier.

3. What do I need to know?

Would additional accountability contact address what prevented the workouts, or is a different barrier affecting follow-through?

4. What is the accountability task?

Determine whether check-in frequency is actually the variable that needs to change.

5. Least intensive useful response

"Before we increase the check-ins, what was happening when you planned to work out but didn't?"

No larger intervention is justified yet.

WHEN YOU FEEL UNCERTAIN

Uncertainty does not require immediate resolution.

A professional response may be:

"I am not sure yet whether this is a capacity issue or avoidance. Let's see what happens under the revised schedule this week."

The next commitment can generate evidence.

WHEN YOU FEEL CERTAIN

Still ask:

"What evidence would make me change my mind?"

This protects against premature closure.

THE FIVE-QUESTION CARD

Before a significant intervention:

- 1. What do I know?**
- 2. What am I inferring?**
- 3. What do I still need to know?**
- 4. What is the accountability task?**
- 5. What is the least intensive response that will accomplish it?**

THE CENTRAL PRINCIPLE

Expert accountability is not maximal analysis.

It is sufficient analysis to make the next accountability decision well.