



accountabili-buddy

— CLARITY. COMMITMENT. FOLLOW THROUGH. —



REFERENCE
SHEETS

REFERENCE SHEET 14

UPDATING A FORMULATION

A formulation is the Accountabili-Buddy's current best explanation of what is affecting follow-through.

It is not a diagnosis.

It is not a permanent label.

It is not something the Accountabili-Buddy should defend once contradictory evidence appears.

A formulation is a **working model that should change when the evidence changes.**

FORMULATION EXAMPLE

Observed:

- Client repeatedly completes preparation
- Client repeatedly delays submission
- Usable time exists

Working Formulation:

Possible avoidance concentrated at the point of external evaluation.

This formulation helps determine what to test next.

It does not establish psychological certainty.

NEW EVIDENCE CAN DO FOUR THINGS

1. CONFIRM

New evidence fits the current formulation.

Example:

Formulation:

Evening fatigue may be reducing study follow-through.

Intervention:

Move sessions to mornings.

Result:

Three consecutive weeks of improved completion.

Interpretation:

The evidence increasingly supports the formulation.

2. WEAKEN

New evidence is less consistent with the formulation.

Example:

Formulation:

Poor scheduling is the main problem.

Intervention:

Schedule exact protected work periods.

Result:

Client consistently appears at the scheduled time but does not begin.

Interpretation:

Scheduling may still matter, but it no longer adequately explains the behavior.

3. CONTRADICT

New evidence directly challenges the formulation.

Example:

Formulation:

Client is avoiding publication because of perfectionism.

New Evidence:

The website contains a reproducible mobile defect that prevents basic navigation.

Interpretation:

The current delay has a legitimate technical cause.

Prior avoidance history does not make the current explanation false.

4. LEAVE IT UNCHANGED

Some new information has little relevance to the formulation.

Example:

Client normally studies mornings.

Client mentions attending a birthday dinner Saturday.

If Saturday was never a planned study period, this information may not affect the formulation.

Not every new fact requires an update.

THREE POSSIBLE ACTIONS

After reviewing new evidence:

KEEP

The formulation still explains the available evidence well.

REFINE

The formulation remains partly useful but needs modification.

Example:

Initial:

"Client lacks time."

Refined:

"Work demands reduce available time, but task-specific avoidance also occurs when opportunities remain."

REPLACE

A different explanation now fits the evidence better.

Example:

Initial:

"Client is avoiding outreach."

New Evidence:

Client repeatedly attempts outreach but cannot proceed because they do not understand the required software.

Replace With:

"Missing technical competence is currently the primary barrier."

DO NOT PROTECT YOUR FIRST THEORY

Weak Accountabili-Buddy reasoning:

"I still think it is avoidance."

despite accumulating contradictory evidence.

A professional formulation exists to help the client.

It is not a position the Accountabili-Buddy needs to win.

DO NOT SWING WITH EVERY NEW DETAIL

The opposite error is constant reformulation.

One unusual week should not erase months of evidence.

Example:

Three months of reliable morning exercise.

One missed morning because of an early flight.

Do not conclude:

"Morning workouts no longer work."

Update proportionately.

WEIGH EVIDENCE BY QUALITY

Evidence is not equally informative.

Stronger evidence often includes:

- Repeated behavior
- Directly reported or verifiable behavior
- Clear performance records
- Intervention outcomes
- Consistent patterns across conditions
- Specific client reports

Weaker evidence may include:

- One unusual week
- Vague impressions
- Assumptions
- Labels without behavioral support

USE INTERVENTIONS TO TEST FORMULATIONS

An intervention can function as a practical test.

Hypothesis

Task is missed because it is never scheduled.

Intervention

Schedule two protected work periods.

Result A

Both occur.

Scheduling hypothesis gains support.

Result B

Client remembers, has available time, and still does not begin.

Scheduling hypothesis weakens.

The intervention has produced information even if the commitment was not completed.

ASK WHAT THE RESULT SHOULD LOOK LIKE IF THE FORMULATION IS CORRECT

Example:**Hypothesis:**

The commitment is unrealistic because there are only two available exercise periods.

Prediction:

Reducing from four sessions to two should substantially improve completion.

If two still repeatedly fail despite available opportunities, the original formulation becomes less sufficient.

CLIENT DISAGREEMENT IS NOT DISCONFIRMING EVIDENCE BY ITSELF**Client:**

"I do not think I am avoiding."

That matters.

But disagreement alone neither proves nor disproves the formulation.

Where possible, test behaviorally.

CLIENT AGREEMENT IS NOT CONFIRMING EVIDENCE BY ITSELF**Client:**

"Yes, I am definitely overwhelmed."

Agreement does not establish that overwhelm is the best formulation.

Look at the behavior.

The client may be correct.

The client may also be applying a familiar label inaccurately.

CONFIDENCE SHOULD MATCH EVIDENCE

Useful internal levels:

Low Confidence

One or two plausible clues.

Moderate Confidence

Repeated evidence supports the formulation, but alternatives remain credible.

High Confidence

Multiple observations and intervention results consistently support the formulation.

Even high-confidence formulations remain revisable.

FORMULATION UPDATE QUESTIONS

Ask:

What evidence supported my original formulation?

What new evidence has appeared?

Does it confirm, weaken, contradict, or leave the formulation unchanged?

Is another explanation now more plausible?

Am I giving one new event too much weight?

Am I giving historical evidence too much weight?

What would I expect to observe if my formulation were correct?

Can the next commitment help test it?

RECORD THE UPDATE

Example:

Initial Formulation: Poor planning.

Intervention: Two protected sessions scheduled.

New Evidence: Client appeared for both sessions but repeatedly worked on unrelated tasks.

Updated Formulation: Scheduling improved opportunity but does not fully explain non-follow-through; task-specific avoidance now more plausible.

This creates professional continuity.

THE CENTRAL PRINCIPLE

A strong Accountabili-Buddy is not the person who gets the first formulation right.

A strong Accountabili-Buddy builds a reasonable formulation from available evidence and changes it when better evidence requires change.