



accountabili-buddy

— CLARITY. COMMITMENT. FOLLOW THROUGH. —



CASE
STUDIES

CASE STUDY 2

AVOIDANCE

1. TRAINING OBJECTIVE

Recognize task-specific avoidance when the client has opportunity to act but repeatedly substitutes other activities at the point of execution.

2. CLIENT PROFILE

Client: Daniel

Goal: Resolve an overdue tax issue

Current Commitment: Call his accountant by Thursday.

The call is expected to take approximately ten minutes.

3. RELEVANT HISTORY

Daniel has already gathered the documents his accountant requested.

The previous week, he said he would call but did not.

This week, the commitment was made more specific: call by Thursday.

4. CLIENT MESSAGE

Accountabili-Buddy: Did the accountant call happen?

Daniel: No.

Accountabili-Buddy: What got in the way?

Daniel: I don't know. I had time. Yesterday I literally picked up my phone to call and then decided I should answer some emails first. Then I cleaned up my desk. Then I remembered I needed to order printer ink. By the time I looked at the clock their office was closed.

Daniel: I've been doing that all week.

5. TRAINEE TASK

What is the most likely formulation?

What would you say next?

6. EVIDENCE ANALYSIS

FACTS

- Daniel has the necessary documents.
- The required action is clear.
- He has had opportunities to make the call.
- He has approached the point of execution.
- At that point, he repeatedly shifts to unrelated tasks.
- The behavior has occurred repeatedly during the week.
- The same call was not completed the previous week.

CLIENT INTERPRETATION

Daniel says he does not know why he is doing this.

ACCOUNTABILI-BUDDY INFERENCE

Avoidance is strongly supported.

The evidence does not yet establish why Daniel is avoiding the call.

Possible reasons include anticipated discomfort, embarrassment, fear of receiving bad news, uncertainty about the conversation, or another factor.

Those possibilities should not be treated as facts.

7. PRIMARY FORMULATION

Task-specific avoidance.

The principal obstacle does not appear to be lack of time, unclear action, or competing priorities.

Daniel repeatedly disengages when the decisive action becomes immediately available.

8. ALTERNATIVE FORMULATIONS

A practical barrier remains possible but is not currently evident.

Loss of interest is unlikely because the tax issue still requires resolution.

Simple non-follow-through is less adequate than avoidance because Daniel describes a repeated behavioral sequence in which he approaches the action and substitutes other tasks.

9. MISSING INFORMATION

The reason the call is difficult or uncomfortable may matter.

A discriminating question would ask what Daniel notices or experiences at the point when he is about to call.

10. RECOMMENDED RESPONSE

“This looks less like a time problem and more like avoidance of the call itself. What do you notice happening when you're right at the point of making the call?”

11. REASONING

The evidence is strong enough to name avoidance provisionally.

The response then investigates the specific feature of the task that may be maintaining it.

It does not accuse Daniel of making excuses or assume a particular reason for the avoidance.

12. PLAUSIBLE ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE

“You've gotten as far as picking up the phone and then switched to other tasks several times. What happens for you right before you're about to make the call?”

This version remains more descriptive and may be preferable if the Accountabili-Buddy wants to test the avoidance formulation without naming it immediately.

13. WEAK RESPONSE EXAMPLES

WEAK RESPONSE A

“Let's set a specific time tomorrow and make sure you do it then.”

Problem: Daniel already remembers the task, has time available, and repeatedly reaches the point of execution. More scheduling specificity does not address the observed barrier.

WEAK RESPONSE B

"Maybe you've just been too busy."

Problem: Daniel explicitly reports having time and describes repeated substitution at the point of action.

WEAK RESPONSE C

"You're procrastinating because you're afraid of what the accountant will tell you."

Problem: Avoidance is supported. Fear of the accountant's response is not yet established.

14. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

The next client response should help discriminate among possible reasons for avoidance.

That information will determine whether the accountability intervention should address uncertainty, discomfort, perfectionistic preparation, or simply committing to make the call despite discomfort.

15. RECORD / UPDATE

Goal: Resolve tax issue

Commitment: Call accountant by Thursday

Result: Not completed

Observed Pattern: Repeated substitution of unrelated tasks immediately before calling

Current Formulation: Task-specific avoidance

Unknown: What makes the call difficult or uncomfortable

16. SCORING CRITERIA

Full-credit responses should:

- Recognize the behavioral evidence for avoidance
- Distinguish avoidance from its unknown cause
- Not default to additional scheduling when the evidence does not support a scheduling problem
- Use inquiry to identify the relevant feature of the avoided action
- Remain descriptive rather than accusatory

