



accountabili-buddy

— CLARITY. COMMITMENT. FOLLOW THROUGH. —



CASE
STUDIES

CASE STUDY 27

LOSS OF INTEREST VS. DISCOURAGEMENT

1. TRAINING OBJECTIVE

Distinguish a genuine change in goal value from withdrawal associated with repeated disappointment or declining confidence.

The trainee should determine whether the client no longer values the goal itself or whether difficulty pursuing it is affecting her willingness to remain engaged.

2. CLIENT PROFILE

Client: Melissa

Goal: Complete a half marathon

Current Commitment: Three training sessions per week.

3. RELEVANT HISTORY

Melissa originally described the race as deeply important.

Over the last month, she has missed several training sessions because of inconsistent scheduling and one minor illness.

Her pace has also improved less quickly than she expected.

4. CLIENT MESSAGE

Accountabili-Buddy: Do you still want to keep the half marathon as the goal?

Melissa: I don't know anymore.

Melissa: Maybe I just don't care that much.

Melissa: Every week I feel like I'm behind. Everyone else seems to be getting faster and I'm still struggling.

Melissa: Honestly, thinking about the race just makes me feel bad now.

5. TRAINEE TASK

What are the two strongest competing formulations?

What evidence supports each?

What information would discriminate between them?

What would you say next?

6. EVIDENCE ANALYSIS

FACTS

- Melissa expresses uncertainty about continuing the goal.
- She previously described completing the race as deeply important.
- She has missed several training sessions during the last month.
- Her pace has improved less quickly than she expected.
- She compares her progress negatively with other runners.
- She reports feeling behind.
- Thinking about the race now produces a negative emotional response.

- Melissa says she may no longer care, but she does not clearly state that completing the race itself has become unimportant independent of her current training experience.

CLIENT INTERPRETATION

Melissa wonders whether she no longer cares about the goal.

Her own interpretation remains uncertain.

ACCOUNTABILITY-BUDDY INFERENCE

Discouragement is strongly plausible because Melissa's uncertainty appears in the context of missed training, slower-than-expected progress, negative comparison, and feeling behind.

Genuine loss of interest also remains possible.

The available evidence does not yet establish whether the value of the goal has changed or whether Melissa's current experience pursuing it is affecting her desire to continue.

7. PRIMARY FORMULATION

Discouragement versus genuine loss of goal value remains unresolved.

8. ALTERNATIVE FORMULATIONS

DISCOURAGEMENT

Melissa may still value completing the race, while repeated disappointment and declining confidence are making continued pursuit feel less appealing.

Under this formulation, the goal retains value even though Melissa currently feels badly about her progress toward it.

LOSS OF INTEREST

Melissa's experience with training may have genuinely changed her assessment of whether completing the half marathon is still important enough to pursue.

Under this formulation, improved confidence or better progress would not necessarily restore her interest in the goal.

9. MISSING INFORMATION

The Accountabili-Buddy needs to distinguish between two questions:

Would completing the race still matter to Melissa if she felt more confident about her ability to do it?

and

Has completing the race itself become less important regardless of her confidence or current training experience?

The smallest useful question should isolate goal value from current discouragement as much as possible.

10. RECOMMENDED RESPONSE

"I'm not sure yet whether the race matters less to you or whether feeling behind is making you want distance from it. If you knew you could finish it at a pace you were comfortable with, would you still want to do it?"

11. REASONING

The question separates the value of the goal from Melissa's current confidence, performance expectations, and comparison with other runners.

It does not tell Melissa that she still cares simply because she is upset.

It also does not treat her current discouragement as proof that the goal has lost value.

Instead, the question hypothetically reduces the confidence and performance problem and asks whether desire for the outcome remains.

If Melissa would still want to complete the race under those conditions, discouragement gains explanatory weight.

If she would no longer want the race even under those conditions, genuine loss of interest gains explanatory weight.

If Melissa remains uncertain, the Accountabili-Buddy can retain both formulations rather than forcing premature goal continuation or closure.

12. PLAUSIBLE ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE

“Let’s separate two questions. Do you still want the experience of completing the race, and do you currently feel good about how training is going? Those don’t have to have the same answer.”

This response helps Melissa distinguish goal value from her current experience pursuing the goal without assuming what either answer should be.

13. WEAK RESPONSE EXAMPLES

WEAK RESPONSE A

“You clearly still care or you wouldn’t be upset.”

Problem: Emotional investment does not conclusively establish continued desire for the goal. The response substitutes the Accountabili-Buddy’s interpretation for Melissa’s evaluation.

WEAK RESPONSE B

“Maybe it is time to let the race go.”

Problem: The response moves toward goal closure before distinguishing changed goal value from discouragement.

WEAK RESPONSE C

"Stop comparing yourself with other runners."

Problem: Comparison may be contributing to Melissa's discouragement, but correcting it does not answer the immediate accountability question of whether the goal itself remains endorsed.

14. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

If Melissa indicates that completing the race would still matter to her if she felt more confident about her ability to do it, discouragement gains weight and the accountability process can examine what is contributing to the difficulty in pursuing the still-valued goal.

If Melissa indicates that completing the race itself no longer matters enough to pursue, the goal can be reconsidered or closed.

If she remains uncertain, the Accountabili-Buddy does not need to force an immediate decision. The distinction can remain open until additional evidence or reflection makes the client's position clearer.

Melissa retains ownership of whether the goal continues.

15. RECORD / UPDATE

Goal: Complete a half marathon

Current Commitment: Three training sessions per week

Current Issue: Uncertainty about continuing the goal

Discouragement Evidence: Missed training; slower-than-expected progress; negative comparison; feeling behind; negative emotional response to the race

Loss-of-Interest Evidence: Melissa questions whether she still cares about the goal

Current Formulation: Discouragement versus genuine loss of goal value remains unresolved

Missing Information: Whether completing the race would still matter if current confidence and performance concerns were reduced

Next Question: If Melissa believed she could finish comfortably, would she still want to complete the race?

16. SCORING CRITERIA

Full-credit responses should:

- Maintain both discouragement and genuine loss of interest as plausible formulations
- Distinguish desire for the goal from confidence about achieving it
- Recognize Melissa's prior valuation of the goal as relevant evidence without treating it as proof of current value
- Avoid treating current distress as proof that Melissa still wants the goal
- Avoid treating discouragement as proof that the goal has lost value
- Ask a question that meaningfully isolates goal value from current confidence and performance experience
- Avoid persuading Melissa either to persist or quit
- Leave the final decision about goal continuation with Melissa