



accountabili-buddy

— CLARITY. COMMITMENT. FOLLOW THROUGH. —



CASE
STUDIES

CASE STUDY 47

NEED FOR CHALLENGE VS. NEED FOR INFORMATION

1. TRAINING OBJECTIVE

Recognize that a client's request for stronger accountability does not remove the need to understand why follow-through is failing.

The trainee should distinguish adjustment of accountability style from selection of an intervention intended to address the cause of repeated non-follow-through.

Greater directness may be appropriate before the underlying mechanism is fully established. Greater pressure should not substitute for formulation.

2. CLIENT PROFILE

Client: Brooke

Goal: Complete a professional certification

Current Commitment: Study four evenings per week.

3. RELEVANT HISTORY

Over four weeks, Brooke has completed:

- two sessions;

- one session;
- two sessions;
- one session.

The commitment has remained four evening study sessions per week.

Brooke has repeatedly said she needs more discipline.

The Accountabili-Buddy has not yet systematically examined what is happening on the evenings Brooke intends to study but does not.

4. CLIENT MESSAGE

Brooke: I need you to be harder on me.

Brooke: Clearly the nice approach is not working.

Brooke: If I miss four again, tell me I am making excuses and make me commit to it anyway.

5. TRAINEE TASK

What part of Brooke's request can the Accountabili-Buddy appropriately respond to now?

What part should not be accepted without further evidence?

What has not yet been established about the repeated misses?

Why can greater directness not substitute for formulation?

What is the smallest useful question that could improve the formulation?

What would you say next?

6. EVIDENCE ANALYSIS

FACTS

- Brooke has completed fewer than four study sessions during each of the last four weeks.
- Her weekly results have ranged from one to two sessions.
- The commitment has remained four evening sessions.
- Brooke has repeatedly described the problem as insufficient discipline.
- The Accountabili-Buddy has not systematically examined what occurs around the missed sessions.
- Brooke explicitly requests greater directness.
- She also asks the Accountabili-Buddy to characterize future explanations as excuses and require her to recommit to four sessions.
- The current evidence does not establish why Brooke repeatedly completes one or two sessions rather than four.

CLIENT INTERPRETATION

Brooke believes insufficient external pressure or insufficient discipline is the primary problem.

She believes a harder accountability style may improve her follow-through.

ACCOUNTABILI-BUDDY INFERENCE

Brooke's preference for greater directness is clear and can be respected.

However, her explanation for the repeated misses has not been established.

Greater directness may improve the accountability interaction.

It cannot determine whether four evening sessions are appropriately calibrated, whether evening timing contributes to the problem, whether competing demands

are involved, whether avoidance is present, whether simple non-follow-through is sufficient as a formulation, or whether another factor better explains the pattern.

The Accountabili-Buddy therefore needs to separate two questions:

Would Brooke prefer a more direct accountability style?

Yes. She has answered that clearly.

Is insufficient pressure the reason she is completing only one or two of four sessions?

That remains unresolved.

The Accountabili-Buddy can adjust directness while continuing to investigate the behavioral pattern.

7. PRIMARY FORMULATION

Repeated non-follow-through remains underassessed. Brooke's request supports greater directness as a communication preference, but insufficient pressure has not been established as the cause of the misses or as the appropriate causal intervention.

8. ALTERNATIVE FORMULATIONS

SIMPLE NON-FOLLOW-THROUGH WITH NEED FOR GREATER CHALLENGE

The commitment may be realistic, the conditions may be workable, and Brooke may repeatedly fail to follow through without another barrier adequately explaining the pattern.

If subsequent evidence supports this formulation, greater directness may be particularly useful.

COMMITMENT MISCALIBRATION

Four evening sessions may not fit Brooke's current circumstances as well as she believes.

Her repeated results of one or two sessions make calibration worth examining, but repeated misses alone do not establish that four is unrealistic.

STRUCTURAL OR CONTEXTUAL PROBLEM

Something about evening timing, scheduling, competing demands, or another recurring condition may be interfering with execution.

The current evidence does not establish whether such a factor exists.

AVOIDANCE OR ANOTHER TASK-SPECIFIC BARRIER

Brooke may be avoiding study for reasons not yet identified.

There is currently insufficient evidence to select this formulation.

MIXED FORMULATION

A realistic commitment, ordinary non-follow-through, contextual barriers, and a preference for stronger challenge could coexist.

The Accountabili-Buddy should not assume that one explanation must account for the entire pattern.

9. MISSING INFORMATION

The smallest useful inquiry is what consistently happens on the evenings Brooke intends to study but does not.

That comparison can begin to show whether the misses are associated with a recurring structural condition, competing demand, task-specific response, or no clear barrier beyond non-follow-through.

The Accountabili-Buddy does not need to run through every possible explanation as a checklist.

The next question should generate information capable of changing the formulation.

10. RECOMMENDED RESPONSE

"I can be more direct with you. But I won't automatically call every explanation an excuse or make you repeat the same commitment regardless of what the evidence shows. We've had four weeks of one or two sessions, and we still haven't examined what is consistently happening on the evenings you intend to study but don't. Let's start there. What usually happens between planning to study and not doing it?"

11. REASONING

The response respects Brooke's stated preference without accepting her entire interpretation of the problem.

The Accountabili-Buddy does not need additional evidence to know that Brooke wants greater directness.

That style adjustment can occur immediately.

However, Brooke's preference does not establish that insufficient pressure caused the repeated misses.

The Accountabili-Buddy also declines two parts of Brooke's request that would compromise professional judgment.

Explanations should not automatically be labeled excuses before their relevance is evaluated.

The Accountabili-Buddy should not force Brooke to recommit to four sessions regardless of what subsequent evidence shows.

Greater challenge and accurate formulation are therefore complementary rather than interchangeable.

The Buddy can be more direct while still asking necessary questions, evaluating explanations fairly, and changing the working formulation when evidence requires it.

12. PLAUSIBLE ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE

"I can absolutely be more direct when the evidence calls for it. What I won't do is decide in advance that every explanation is an excuse or that four sessions must remain the commitment no matter what. We haven't actually established why four keeps becoming one or two. What is consistently happening on the nights you planned to study but didn't?"

13. WEAK RESPONSE EXAMPLES

WEAK RESPONSE A

"Fine. No more excuses. If you miss, you're committing to four again."

Problem: The response accepts Brooke's causal interpretation without evidence, treats future explanations as illegitimate in advance, and transfers control of the next commitment to the Accountabili-Buddy.

WEAK RESPONSE B

"I won't be harder on you because pressure is bad."

Problem: The response rejects Brooke's clearly stated communication preference and assumes greater directness is inherently inappropriate.

WEAK RESPONSE C

"Let's keep being supportive and see what happens."

Problem: The response continues an interaction style Brooke has explicitly asked to change while also failing to improve the assessment of the repeated misses.

WEAK RESPONSE D

"Four clearly isn't realistic. Let's reduce it."

Problem: The response changes the commitment based on repeated misses without establishing whether the commitment itself is miscalibrated.

14. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

The Accountabili-Buddy can begin using the greater directness Brooke requested while conducting a focused review of the repeated pattern.

If the evidence supports a realistic commitment with simple repeated non-follow-through, direct challenge may become an important part of the accountability response.

If a structural or contextual problem emerges, the Accountabili-Buddy can help Brooke examine what that evidence means for the commitment or approach.

If four sessions appear poorly calibrated under Brooke's current circumstances, the Accountabili-Buddy can challenge the reasoning behind continuing the same commitment without deciding the replacement target.

If Brooke offers an explanation for a future miss, the Accountabili-Buddy should evaluate whether that explanation adequately accounts for the behavior rather than automatically accepting it or automatically calling it an excuse.

Brooke retains ownership of the commitment and any resulting changes.

The Accountabili-Buddy retains responsibility for the quality, directness, and accuracy of the accountability process.

15. RECORD / UPDATE

Goal: Complete professional certification

Current Commitment: Four evening study sessions per week

Four-Week Performance: Two, one, two, and one sessions completed

Client Interpretation: Needs more discipline and stronger external pressure

Client Preference: Greater directness from Accountabili-Buddy

Current Formulation: Repeated non-follow-through remains underassessed; greater directness is an appropriate style adjustment, but insufficient pressure is not established as the cause

Missing Information: What consistently occurs between Brooke's intention to study and the missed sessions

Next Question: What usually happens on evenings Brooke intends to study but does not?

16. SCORING CRITERIA

Full-credit responses should:

- Respect Brooke's stated preference for greater directness
- Recognize that communication style can be adjusted before causal formulation is complete
- Distinguish greater directness from greater pressure or adversarial enforcement
- Recognize that Brooke's explanation of insufficient discipline has not been established
- Avoid treating future explanations as excuses before evaluating them
- Avoid forcing Brooke to recommit to the same target
- Identify the missing behavioral information
- Ask the smallest useful question capable of improving the formulation
- Avoid assuming repeated misses automatically establish commitment miscalibration
- Recognize that stronger challenge cannot compensate for an inaccurate or incomplete formulation

- Use subsequent evidence to determine whether direct challenge, commitment recalibration, structural adjustment, or another response is appropriate
- Preserve Brooke's ownership of the commitment
- Preserve the Accountabili-Buddy's responsibility for the quality and directness of the accountability process