



accountabili-buddy

— CLARITY. COMMITMENT. FOLLOW THROUGH. —



CASE
STUDIES

CASE STUDY 50

THE INTERVENTION WORKS, THEN STOPS WORKING

1. TRAINING OBJECTIVE

Recognize that an intervention can genuinely address one problem and later cease to be sufficient because the conditions affecting follow-through have changed.

The trainee should understand that later difficulty does not automatically invalidate an earlier successful formulation.

2. CLIENT PROFILE

Client: Raymond

Goal: Study consistently for a technical certification

Commitment: Three study sessions per week

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND

Raymond initially attempted evening study and repeatedly missed sessions because of fatigue.

The Accountabili-Buddy helped Raymond examine when studying was more workable, and Raymond moved his study sessions to mornings.

INTERACTION 1

After two weeks of the morning schedule:

Accountabili-Buddy: Three morning sessions again?

Raymond: Yep. All three.

Raymond: This is way better than evenings.

4. PROVISIONAL FORMULATION

Evening fatigue was a meaningful structural barrier, and morning scheduling appears to address it.

The intervention has produced clear improvement.

Raymond's report is also consistent with the behavioral result: after struggling with evening sessions, he completed all three sessions for two consecutive weeks using the morning structure.

This strengthens the timing formulation without proving that timing is the only factor that can ever affect his study behavior.

5. INITIAL INTERVENTION DECISION

Continue the morning structure without changing the target.

There is no current evidence requiring another intervention.

INTERACTION 2

Three weeks later:

Accountabili-Buddy: One session this week. What happened?

Raymond: I skipped Monday and Wednesday.

Accountabili-Buddy: Were the mornings unavailable?

Raymond: No. I was awake.

Raymond: I just kept scrolling on my phone instead.

Raymond: Friday I finally studied.

6. UPDATED EVIDENCE

The earlier timing problem does not adequately explain the current misses.

The morning opportunities remained available.

Raymond reports being awake during them.

Despite the previously successful structure, he did not initiate studying on Monday or Wednesday and instead spent the time scrolling on his phone.

He completed the Friday session.

This is important new evidence.

The morning intervention previously improved follow-through and may still provide a useful structure. However, that structure is no longer sufficient to explain or prevent the current non-follow-through.

The Accountabili-Buddy should not conclude that mornings have stopped being workable merely because misses occurred within them.

Instead, the current barrier requires reassessment.

7. REVISED FORMULATION

The earlier formulation remains supported for the period in which evening fatigue interfered with studying.

A different or additional barrier now appears to be affecting initiation within the morning structure.

Possible formulations include:

- emerging task-specific avoidance;

- declining interest;
- task fatigue;
- interference from a competing morning habit;
- ordinary short-term non-follow-through;
- another factor not yet identified.

The current evidence does not yet discriminate adequately among these possibilities.

8. TRAINEE DECISION POINT

Should the Accountabili-Buddy move the sessions again?

Not based on the current evidence.

Changing the schedule would assume that timing has become the problem again.

The more useful question is what changed between the period when Raymond was completing the morning sessions and the current week when the morning opportunities remained available but initiation declined.

9. RECOMMENDED RESPONSE

“Mornings addressed the fatigue problem, and they were working for several weeks. This week the morning time was still available and you were awake, but studying didn't start on Monday or Wednesday. What was different about starting the study sessions this week?”

This preserves what was learned from the successful intervention while investigating the new evidence.

INTERACTION 3

Raymond: I am just sick of the material.

Raymond: I still want the certification, but I hit this section on network protocols and I hate it.

Raymond: The earlier sections were more interesting.

10. FINAL FORMULATION

Task-specific disengagement or avoidance associated with an aversive section of the material.

Raymond continues to endorse the certification goal.

His report identifies a change associated with the current section rather than a general loss of interest in the certification.

The earlier morning scheduling intervention remains supported as useful for the fatigue barrier.

The new evidence indicates that a different barrier has emerged within that otherwise workable structure.

The Accountabili-Buddy therefore does not need to discard the earlier learning.

The formulation has changed because the conditions affecting Raymond's behavior have changed.

11. RECOMMENDED NEXT INTERVENTION

“Then mornings may still be a workable structure. What's changed is the material you're trying to start. You still want the certification, but you're finding this section particularly unpleasant to work through. Given that, what commitment makes sense for getting through this section?”

Raymond may choose to maintain three sessions, modify the commitment, change how he approaches this portion of the study plan, or make another adjustment within his control.

The Accountabili-Buddy can help Raymond evaluate whether the resulting commitment is clear, realistic, meaningful, and connected to the goal.

The Accountabili-Buddy does not need to prescribe the technical study method or determine how Raymond should learn the material.

12. WHY THIS CASE MATTERS

A common Accountabili-Buddy error is reasoning:

“If the intervention stopped working, the original formulation must have been wrong.”

That conclusion does not follow automatically.

An intervention may successfully address the barrier that existed when it was introduced.

Later, the environment, task, commitment, motivation, or other conditions affecting behavior may change.

The relevant question is what the intervention outcome actually teaches.

In Raymond's case:

Time 1: Evening sessions repeatedly failed in association with fatigue.

Intervention: Raymond moved studying to mornings.

Initial Result: Follow-through improved substantially.

Evidence Update: The result strengthened the formulation that evening fatigue had been a meaningful barrier.

Later Result: Morning opportunities remained available, but initiation declined.

New Evidence: Raymond reported strong aversion to the current section while continuing to value the certification.

Updated Formulation: The morning structure may remain useful, while a new task-specific barrier now affects follow-through.

Professional accountability therefore requires distinguishing:

an intervention that never adequately addressed the identified problem

from

an intervention that addressed the original problem but is no longer sufficient because another barrier has emerged.

13. WEAK ACCOUNTABILITY-BUDDY RESPONSES

WEAK RESPONSE A

"Mornings are not working anymore. Let's try afternoons."

Problem: Changes the structure before establishing that timing has become the problem again. The existing evidence still supports mornings as having successfully addressed the earlier fatigue barrier.

WEAK RESPONSE B

"You need to go back to what worked."

Problem: Raymond is already using the structure that previously worked. Repeating the same advice does not account for the new evidence.

WEAK RESPONSE C

"You are losing motivation."

Problem: This is too broad. Raymond continues to endorse the certification goal and identifies a specific section of the material as particularly aversive.

WEAK RESPONSE D

"I guess mornings never really solved the problem."

Problem: Reinterprets the earlier successful period in light of the current difficulty. The previous improvement remains evidence that the timing change was useful under the earlier conditions.

14. RECORD / UPDATE

Goal: Study consistently for technical certification

Initial Barrier: Evening fatigue interfering with study sessions

Initial Intervention: Raymond moves study sessions to mornings

Initial Outcome: Three sessions completed consistently across the successful period

Evidence Update: Morning scheduling appears to address the earlier fatigue barrier

New Pattern: Morning opportunities remain available, but initiation declines

New Information: Raymond reports strong dislike of the current network-protocol section while continuing to want the certification

Revised Formulation: Task-specific disengagement or avoidance associated with the current section

Intervention Status: Morning structure remains potentially useful but is no longer sufficient by itself

Next Step: Raymond selects a commitment appropriate to progressing through the current section, with the Accountabili-Buddy evaluating the quality of the accountability structure rather than prescribing technical study methods

15. SCORING CRITERIA

Full-credit responses should:

- Preserve the validity of the earlier evidence and successful formulation
- Recognize that the morning intervention produced meaningful improvement
- Avoid treating later misses as proof that the original formulation was wrong
- Recognize that the current misses require renewed formulation

- Avoid unnecessary schedule changes without evidence that timing has again become the barrier
- Distinguish continued value of the certification goal from aversion to a specific section
- Use the change in study material as relevant new evidence
- Recognize that an intervention can remain useful while becoming insufficient
- Update the formulation rather than discarding valid prior learning
- Match the next accountability response to the current evidence
- Preserve Raymond's ownership of the next commitment
- Avoid providing technical study instruction outside the Accountabili-Buddy role
- Treat intervention outcomes as evidence about both the formulation and the continuing usefulness of the intervention