

Unsticking the stuckness

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Purpose

The purpose of this strategy is to prompt action when the client is feeling or acting 'stuck'.

Description

People often describe themselves as procrastinators but this is little more than a disempowering label. It is a kind of apathy created by the mind to protect itself. If the client uses words or phrases such as:

- can't be bothered
- I can't
- I don't know
- lazy
- overwhelmed
- stuck
- too tired
- useless

then this strategy is for them. If the activity they are putting off doing feels hard to them, it is a clear indication of resistance. Here's an interesting fact: you can't feel others pushing you, you can only feel yourself pushing back. So it's the client's own resistance that needs to be addressed. Here is a process for helping them let go of their feelings of resistance.

Process

Ask the client questions for the area(s) where they feel stuck, as shown in Table 7.

During the questions, keep probing until they have bottomed out their thoughts and fears around the issue, particularly: ‘What’s the worst that could happen?’. After this process, check what their next steps are and how they are feeling about the task. You can also suggest they write it down. This serves two purposes. First, it commits it to paper, which makes the ‘what would I do?’ more likely to happen, and second, the act of reflective writing around the ‘worst

Table 7 Unsticking the stuckness exercise

Where I’m stuck	Write my CV and send it to a prospective employer	Write the presentation for the keynote speech
What’s the worst that could happen?	They could say: ‘That’s the worst CV I’ve ever seen and there’s no way I’d give you a job. What on earth were you thinking of, wasting my time?’	I start writing it and realize it’s rubbish and have no idea how to proceed and have lost all my confidence and energy
What would be more realistic/likely to happen?	They’d say: ‘Thanks for your CV. I’m afraid you don’t have the sort of experience we are after’	I would start it, get to a particular point and think it wasn’t very good, then be unsure how to continue
How would you feel when the more likely thing happens?	Disappointed. But clear about the level of experience required for that job and my suitability for it	Lost, useless, scared
Then what would you do?	Look for other jobs in the professional magazine and apply for those	Ask a colleague if they would read it and give me some feedback

that could happen' is often very cathartic and can be the key to unsticking the stuckness.

Pitfalls

None.