

Advanced Applied Neuroscience Second Look Lab Workbook

Reut Schwartz-Hebron, Founder
and Certifying Partner, KCI



What Kind of Stuck Is This?

A workbook for experienced coaches in preparation for KCI's
Second Look Lab

Reut Schwartz-Hebron · KCI (Key Change Institute) · Advanced Applied Neuroscience

Stuck describes a pattern, not a person.

Imagine you have a meeting with a coaching client tomorrow. They are capable, insightful, and motivated. You've asked good questions, explored their beliefs, values, and assumptions, and joined them in curiosity about how they make meaning of their experiences. Together, you've identified ways forward and created accountability. Still, something feels stuck. Your client can feel it, and so can you.

Before I studied neuroscience, I knew this feeling well. I still encounter difficult coaching situations today, but now I have a much clearer way to understand why the work may be getting stuck. That clarity changes how I navigate what comes next.

But what is blocking transformation exactly?

After training and certifying hundreds of executive and life coaches for nearly two decades, I've learned that more experience does not make these cases rarer. In fact, the more experienced and knowledgeable you are, the more likely you are to notice these moments.

They are typically more difficult to read and navigate because **several things are happening at once**.

Many coaching approaches provide an essential foundation. AAN is designed to work alongside them, adding another layer of understanding that can help clarify and navigate **more complex change challenges**.

This workbook is designed to help you identify which aspects may be getting a specific coaching process stuck. It invites you to practice by using one real practice case (please note that this is not meant to be used to diagnose anyone but should be used for the purpose of practice only).

"I thought I understood the neuroscientific principles of change but I was missing a key piece." — Grace Trepte, MSOD, PCC

How to use this workbook:

1. **Choose your practice case:** One client you keep turning over in your mind (current is great but non-current is fine too).
2. **Check the moments that fit:** This workbook includes fifteen moments that may deserve a second look. Some AAN can support with and others not.
3. **See what the answers are telling you:** Learn from what you find and design next steps.
4. **Bring this workbook to the next Second Look Lab:** If relevant, get specific AAN notes about another way to support your client. Multiply your learning by understanding AAN's contribution to cases shared by other experienced coaches.

Step 1: Choose Your Practice Case

Keep it anonymous: no names, employers, or identifying details.

Think of one client who understands what they want to do differently, genuinely wants the change, but is still stuck.

My client in a few words

e.g., senior leader, 6 months in, delegation

What they want to change or what they are inspired to achieve

What keeps happening instead

What we have already tried

What tends to cause emotional discomfort for my client? What do those moments have in common?

Not sure? Write that down. It's useful information.

Right after that discomfort shows up, what does my client do? What do they tell themselves?

What I notice in myself when I work with this client

If my client could respond differently to that discomfort, what would “better” look like after a few months of coaching?

Clarity score:

Right now, how clear am I about what to explore next with my client? ____ / 10

Step 2: Fifteen moments that may deserve a second look

Check every box that describes a moment which fits your practice case.

The following descriptions are organized into five groups. They are not “types of clients.” These are moments in experienced practice when the visible problem may not tell you what is actually maintaining it. You will recognize some immediately. Others may describe something which may be relevant to other clients you worked with in the past, or moments you have not had language for yet.

Some of these moments sit directly within the territory AAN is designed to help you examine. Others are included because good differential thinking also means recognizing when the explanation lies somewhere else.

Five groups: coaching moments to consider

1. **Group 1:** When insight and action stop lining up.
2. **Group 2:** When you can't tell what's driving the pattern.
3. **Group 3:** When what you see isn't the whole picture.
4. **Group 4:** When you're not sure how far to go.
5. **Group 5:** When the ground shifts

Bonus #1: Challenging Clients (edge cases)

Bonus #2: Part 2 of this workbook is free on request. See the last page.

Group 1: When insight and action stop lining up

☐ 1. The client understands the pattern and still struggles to change it.

The client can describe the pattern, understand where it comes from, sincerely want something different, and even identify what they want to do instead - yet they struggle to change. The new behavior seems possible right up until a certain moment arrives. Then the old response feels fast, necessary, even relieving, but the client regrets it later. At some point, more insight is not enough.

Take a second look: *What is still happening in the moment that insight has not changed?*

☐ 2. You are having the same conversation again.

The details shift, but the coaching keeps returning to the same decision, conflict, boundary, habit, or relationship dynamic. You may be asking good questions and generating useful reflection, yet the work keeps circling the same territory.

Take a second look: *What process keeps recreating this issue, even after the client understands it?*

☐ 3. Accountability should have helped. It did not.

The client genuinely agreed to the plan. They may even have asked you to hold them accountable. Yet somehow the intention does not reliably become action. Sometimes more accountability helps. Sometimes the problem lies somewhere else entirely: in what happens emotionally when the moment arrives, in capacity or context, or in the bridge between deciding and doing itself (initiation, sequencing, working memory, switching, prioritization, etc.).

Take a second look: *What actually happens between intention and action or between deciding and doing?*

Where these show up in my case

Group 2: When you can't tell what's driving the pattern

☐ 4. The goal makes sense but you're not sure it is really theirs.

A client can know exactly what would be sensible, expected, healthy, or professionally advantageous and still not align with those goals. Sometimes they want the change. Sometimes they want to want the change because a boss, partner, culture, or idealized version of themselves says they should.

Take a second look: *What tells me this goal is genuinely chosen rather than merely endorsed?*

☐ 5. Several explanations fit, and you can't tell which one matters most.

The client isn't following through. Is it ambivalence? Fear? Executive-function friction? A goal that isn't really theirs? An environmental constraint? A learned response to emotional discomfort? Something outside coaching scope? The more experienced you become, the problem is often not having too few explanations. It is having several plausible ones, and knowing that they would lead you in different coaching directions.

Take a second look: *What evidence would help me distinguish what is actually maintaining this pattern?*

☐ 6. The sessions feel productive but the pattern is still stuck.

Your client feels heard and understood. Together you've made sense of where the pattern comes from, and the sessions feel warm and useful. Your client is getting better at explaining their experience. But the pattern hasn't changed. Understanding it has made it clearer, without making it any easier to change.

Take a second look: *Is our work changing what my client does in the hard moment, or only how well they can explain it?*

Where these show up in my case

Group 3: When what you see isn't the whole picture

☐ 7. Your client makes changes but the environment keeps pulling them back.

A client may make meaningful changes and then return to a personal relationship, team, culture, reporting relationship, or incentive structure that keeps rewarding the old behavior. If the environment repeatedly recreates the conditions, treating the problem as entirely internal can misread adaptation as dysfunction.

Take a second look: *What changes across contexts, and is the pattern a flexible and intentional adaptation to a difficult reality, or a reactive pattern which skips choice?*

☐ 8. The client's subconscious biases may be blocking what you can coach.

Every coaching conversation begins with the client's point of view. They tell you what happened, why it happened, what they are "good at," and what is difficult for them but we all have blind spots we are unaware of. Some of that may be accurate, but some may be an interpretation that creates a double challenge: If you accept the client's explanation too quickly, you may end up coaching from inside the same assumptions that are helping maintain their patterns. And, if something you observe does not match the story the client is telling, the next challenge can be helping them notice the discrepancy when they are certain about their perspective.

Take a second look: *What am I accepting as fact because it is part of the client's story, what am I observing, and how can I support us test that story together?*

☐ 9. They can do it, but sustaining it may be costing too much.

Some highly capable clients, including many autistic and ADHD professionals, perform well while spending enormous effort managing tone, facial expression, social expectations, or sensory demands. The cost may show up later as shutdown or burnout, which can look like avoidance or disengagement. The client sounds depleted more than conflicted. More stretch and accountability could be exactly the wrong response.

Take a second look: *Is this sustainable for the client, or only possible?*

Where these show up in my case

Group 4: When you're not sure how far to go

☐ 10. You know you need to challenge them but you're not sure how much.

Do you name the contradiction now or wait? Interrupt the story or let it unfold? Push on commitment or protect the space? The same intervention can be developmental at one moment and too much at another. Experienced work often hinges on timing, intensity, and what the client can remain engaged with.

Take a second look: *What level of challenge can this client use rather than merely withstand?*

☐ 11. The work has become emotionally deep, and you're not sure where coaching should stop.

Shame, grief, fear, trauma history, anxiety, burnout, and old relational learning can surface in ordinary coaching. The challenge is neither to pretend emotion is outside coaching nor to slide into clinical work: it is to judge what is relevant, coachable, and within scope, and when another professional should be involved.

Take a second look: *What part of this can coaching responsibly work with, and what support may be needed alongside it?*

☐ 12. Another reflective question isn't enough, but advice would be too much.

This client is sophisticated, experienced, and may already have thought deeply about the situation. Another elegant question may not be what they need. They may want challenge, perspective, a thinking partner, or access to expertise. The difficulty is knowing when your perspective expands their thinking, and when it starts replacing it.

Take a second look: *What contribution from me would deepen this client's thinking without taking ownership of it?*

Where these show up in my case

Group 5: When the ground shifts

☐ 13. Something shifted between you.

The client went quiet, defensive, irritated, compliant, or suddenly distant. A challenge landed differently than you intended. Experienced coaches know that rupture is not automatically failure, but tension is not automatically productive either.

Take a second look: *Should I invite a moment of repair, exploration, ownership, or simply careful learning?*

☐ 14. A diagnosis questions what can or should change.

Clients who discover ADHD or autism as adults often begin rereading years of procrastination, inconsistency, exhaustion, social difficulty, or people-pleasing. A goal like “I need to be more disciplined” or “more confident” may rest on an old explanation of who they are. The client may still be sorting out which patterns are preferences, coping strategies, masking, or real areas they want to change.

Take a second look: *Is this goal built on who the client is, or on an old story about what was wrong with them?*

☐ 15. You notice yourself reacting differently with this client.

You notice yourself wanting to back away, withdraw - or push harder, rescue, persuade, prove your value, or simply find the “right” technique. Perhaps you are unusually frustrated or unusually cautious with this specific client. Experienced coaches know their own response is not automatically evidence about the client. But neither is it always irrelevant. Sometimes what happens in you contains useful information about the coaching relationship, or about the pattern unfolding between you.

Take a second look: *What is my response telling me, and what part of it belongs to me?*

Where these show up in my case

Tally your checks (mark only the ones that apply)

#	Moment	AAN territory? Yes	AAN territory? No
Group 1: When insight and action stop lining up			
1	The client understands the pattern and still struggles to change it.	☐	
2	You are having the same conversation again.	☐	
3	Accountability should have helped. It did not.	☐	
Group 2: When you can't tell what's driving the pattern			
4	The goal makes sense but you're not sure it is really theirs.	☐	
5	Several explanations fit, and you can't tell which one matters most.	☐	
6	The sessions feel productive but the pattern is still stuck.	☐	
Group 3: When what you see isn't the whole picture			
7	Your client makes changes but the environment keeps pulling them back.		☐
8	The client's subconscious biases may be blocking what you can coach.	☐	
9	They can do it, but sustaining it may be costing too much.		☐
Group 4: When you're not sure how far to go			
10	You know you need to challenge them but you're not sure how much.	☐	
11	The work has become emotionally deep, and you're not sure where coaching should stop.	☐	
12	Another reflective question isn't enough, but advice would be too much.		☐
Group 5: When the ground shifts			
13	Something shifted between you.	☐	
14	A diagnosis questions what can or should change.	☐	
15	You notice yourself reacting differently with this client.		☐
Step 2 scores: My totals		___ of 11	___ of 4

Bonus #1: Challenging Clients

For example, imagine a client who is powerful, persuasive, and used to direct others.

Some individuals can explain, rationalize, and defend a position exceptionally well. The coach may be one of the few people in their world who can name a discrepancy without being pulled into the client's certainty. Challenge too softly and nothing moves. Say things too firmly and the relationship closes.

KCI trains experienced coaches to use AAN in layers: mastering first how to engage the whole brain in transformation and then applying the same knowledge to "edge cases" like this one.

"I understand human nature in a way I couldn't before so I coach my clients more effectively."— Lisa Brewer, PCC, CPCC

Step 3: What your answers are telling you

When our coaching clients are struggling with change, that's important data. From an AAN perspective, that's not yet an explanation. If you scored 2 or more AAN related moments, there is a good chance an underlying pattern is the explanation.

(HINT: AAN invites you to ask about the layer underneath your client's story: *"How is my client responding to emotional discomfort?"* And, *"How can I support my client to unlearn and relearn these deep emotional patterns?"* are key AAN questions).

Start with your Step 1 clarity score and your Step 2 tally:

CLARITY SCORE (step 1) ___ / 10	AAN-RELATED CHECKS ___ / 11	OTHER CHECKS ___ / 4
Scores:	What it may mean:	Best next move:
Clarity score is above 6	You already have a reasonably clear direction.	Use the approach you already know fits. Keep AAN as an optional additional lens for future reference.
Clarity score is 6 or lower AND you have zero to one AAN-related checks	Something is unclear, but the source may be crisis, timing, external pressure, environment, capacity, or scope. Other approaches will likely serve you better.	Look wider before assuming a deep emotional pattern is maintaining the problem.
Clarity score is 6 or lower AND you have two or more AAN-related checks	See list on next page.	The case may benefit from a second look at what is maintaining the pattern beneath the visible challenge.

AAN SECOND-LOOK QUESTIONS: How is my client responding to emotional discomfort? • What may need to be unlearned and relearned for this pattern to change?

With a clarity score below 6 and two or more AAN-related checks, you may be facing a case where:

- Several explanations fit at once (high complexity).
- Your client's Prefrontal Cortex is telling you (both you and your client) truths that are not aligned with what the client's Limbic Brain actually wants or believes.
- Deep emotional patterns which your client adopted to protect themselves (not specifically because they are “resisting” this particular coaching process) are blocking the transformation process and generating other obstacles in your client's way.

This is what Advanced Applied Neuroscience (AAN) is designed for

AAN gives coaches a way to take a second look: when insight, motivation, and good coaching are already present, **but you still need a clearer explanation for what is keeping the pattern in place.**

Step 4: Bring this workbook to the next Second Look Lab

You have already done the first half of the work. The case you just mapped is exactly what the Lab is built for: a real client, a pattern that keeps returning, and more than one explanation that could fit.

Bring this case to a small group of experienced coaches and to Reut Schwartz-Hebron, who has spent nearly two decades studying why capable people stay stuck. The goal is not to hand you the “right” answer. It is to widen what you can see, sharpen your working hypotheses, and leave knowing what to explore next.

How it works:

- **Before:** Fill in this workbook. No names or identifying details please.
- **Reserve your spot:**
 - Sign up: [here](#) (this workshop is offered monthly).
 - Send this document: to Reut directly at: Reut@KCIcertification.com (subject: Second Look Lab).
 - Sign agreement: Despite the anonymity of all practice cases, all participants are required to sign a confidentiality form to ensure the highest level of respect to the people we serve. One of KCI's Certifying Partners will reach out to help you complete your registration.

- **Live Session:** We will cover a short AAN teaching on the underlying patterns that block transformation, then each coach's case gets focused time (3 hours, live on Zoom).
- **Small group:** 6 coaches at most.

You will leave with:

- A clearer map of what may be keeping your client's pattern stuck.
- A deeper in-practice understanding of AAN – in the context of your specific practice case and across several examples of other experienced coaches.
- One immediate thing to explore with your coaching client in your very next session.
- A Case Map to explore which pattern is keeping your clients stuck (step by step) so you can reuse AAN glasses to take a second look with future clients who may benefit from it.

Reserve your seat:

Six coaches per Lab, so every case gets real time | Three hours of live discussion on Zoom

Next Lab dates: dates are available [here](#)

Fee: \$295 until March 2027 (\$395 after that).

Note: Your full fee counts toward AAN Foundations if you enroll within 30 days.

Bonus #2: Not ready to join the Second Look Lab yet?

- Let us know, and we'll send you Part 2 of this workbook: **The Second Look Toolkit**. We share our Lab materials freely and with an open heart.
- Scope note: This workbook is educational. It is not a diagnostic tool, clinical assessment, or substitute for professional judgment. Coaches remain responsible for confidentiality, informed consent, ethical practice, and appropriate referral.

"The single most impactful capability I have added to my coaching practice."

— Lisbeth Fabiny, Board Certified HWC