

Task Paralysis (Executive Function Coaching Template)

Title: *Unsticking the Stuck: A Session Template for Task Paralysis*

Step 1: Normalize + Validate

Coach Prompts:

- “It makes sense that you’re feeling stuck. Can we explore what might be going on underneath the surface?”
- “Let’s assume your brain is trying to help you, even if it’s misfiring a bit. What do you think it’s trying to protect you from?”

Purpose: Reduce shame, activate curiosity, reframe task paralysis as *adaptive but outdated wiring*.

Step 2: Executive Function Check-In

Use this mini checklist to explore where the breakdown might be happening:

Executive Function	Reflection Prompt
Task Initiation	“Can you name the <i>very first</i> action this task needs?”
Planning	“Do you know the steps — or is it a bit fuzzy?”
Working Memory	“Do you lose track of what you’re doing mid-task?”
Emotional Regulation	“Is a big feeling (fear, shame, boredom) getting in the way?”
Time Management	“Does this feel like it’s going to take too long or too much energy?”

Step 3: Nervous System Check-In

Coach Prompts:

- “Where’s your body at right now — amped up, shut down, or something else?”
- “Would a short regulation exercise help you feel more present?”

Optional Regulation Tools:

- **Box Breathing** (for identity-shaking moments or inner criticism)
- **Extended Exhale** (if box breathing feels too rigid)
- **Sensory reset:** cold water splash, essential oils, rhythmic rocking

Step 4: Deconstruct the Task (Externalize It)

Coach Prompts:

- “Let’s get it out of your head. Can we name 1–3 mini actions this task is made of?”
- “If you were helping someone else start this task, what would you suggest they do first?”

Tools:

- ☐ Sticky note / index card breakdown
 - ☐ Visual task board
 - ☐ “Start with Ugly” permission slip (let it be bad)
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Step 5: Choose a Gentle Entry Point

Coach Prompts:

- “What’s the *least stressful* way to begin?”
- “What would *future-you* be proud of you for doing — even if it’s tiny?”

Options:

- ☐ Set a 3-minute timer
 - ☐ Body double (you, a friend, or a silent Zoom room)
 - ☐ Verbalize the first step out loud
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Step 6: Reflect + Reinforce

Coach Prompts:

- “What helped you shift from frozen to even slightly unfrozen?”
- “What can you try next time a freeze like this comes up?”
- “What do you want to remember about how this went?”

Celebrate:

- ☒ Not the output — the *moment of initiation*
 - ☒ Regulated choices
 - ☒ Self-awareness, experimentation, and effort
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Optional Add-Ons

- Add a “What Helped Me” section to their planner or journal

- Build a **Task Paralysis Toolkit**: e.g. playlist, regulation tools, reminder quotes
- Set up **visual cues** or a “Low-Energy Task Menu” for the future