

Recognizing the Value of Resistance

Many ministry workers see resistance in a negative light. After all, resistance seems to slow down progress for change. In reality, resistance is a very valid part of the process of seeing someone come to a long-standing change. Resistance gives us clues of what hang-ups are getting in the way of progress. Ignoring these obstacles only short-circuits the desired growth. Being able to address the hang-ups clears the way for profitable change.

We sometimes are tempted to take offense at resistance because we believe the person is resisting us rather than seeing the resistance as directed toward some roadblock. Make the competition between both of you and the problem at hand, rather than between you and the other person.



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Without resistance, products made from metals would be destroyed by erosion; without resistance planes would not be able to land because they would lose the capability of friction; without resistance, a car would not have brakes; without resistance, we would not have electrical heating and no control over the usable amount of electricity. Resistance is a valuable fact of life.

For the purpose of this discussion, we will define resistance as “saying no, pushing away, fighting against, refusing, opposing.”

Resistance is often present when there is a sense of threat. Threat comes in many ways. Here is a chart to show not only why I am resistant but also what I can do to get past resistance. If it works for me, perhaps I could offer it to the client.

Why am I resistant?	How can I get past this?
Fear of loss of control	Agree with God about His control
My experience says it won't work	Recognize difference in my strength and His
I like my comfort zone	Evaluate consequence of no change
Don't know if it is worth it	Find out, ask others who have changed
Fear of failure	Get God's perspective on failure
Just don't want to	Pray – ask God to make you willing

Without the opportunity for the client to see the source of his response, he will not have the opportunity to develop work and relational skills for his future. Resistance is a form of passive-aggressive behavior, sometimes a learned response in reaction to authority. There are those clients who have learned resistance as a way of manipulation and even sabotage.

Some people just have a habit of resistance. I know, because I was one of those. No matter what, something new is met with doubt, hesitation, and distrust. The good side of that coin is evaluation and discretion. The opposite side is procrastination and inflexibility.

The starting point always needs to be agreement on what is the goal. Then follow this with questions rather than preaching. If you can share in the goal at hand, you can help the client to see options to meet that goal. When they come up with “their own ideas,” they do not resist.

We can exacerbate the situation by initially giving clients something to resist, like starting the conversation with “You need to change your behavior.” We need to roll with their resistance. Avoid arguing for change, actually inviting people to defend the behavior they might change. Most people have a lot of ambivalence, and if we can identify it, we can help them wrestle with it.

For starters:

- Seek to clarify, understand
- Reinforce person’s role as problem-solver
- Keep on your client’s side
- Confront by asking questions
- Offer new perspectives

When should I be resistant?

- *when it is scriptural to do so*
- *when God’s plans for me are challenged*
- *when someone could be hurt*

Help your clients see the value in using their resistance ability to resist in good ways, and the waste of resisting in ways that are not good. Again, you will have greater success if you do this via questions.

	Resistance That Is Good	Resistance That Is Not Good	
One good resistance is the clients to thinking skills so accept is said to them.	Resist Evil One	Saying no to God	reason for desire for your develop critical- they will not everything that
	Drugs	God-Directed Authority	
	Sin/Wrong	Learning	
	Temptation	Playing Dumb	
	Fears that keep me down	Avoidance	
	Peer Pressure	Lying	

Rather than getting hung up on seeing the client as just stubborn, here is an opportunity to get to the bottom of the specific issue at hand and also to develop new practices for a new life. I challenge you to see it as opportunity for a changed life.

Motivation to change

Ready – a matter of priorities

Willing – importance of change

Able – confidence to change

Do I know it is worth it?

Do I know the pathway works?

Do I trust the people involved?

Who is in charge?

What is my responsibility?

What will be the result?

