

# Overcoming resistance

*Carl Jung's wise words "what we resist persists" couldn't be more true. Transcend your resistance by courageously stepping outside your comfort zone to unlock your full potential.*

*Words EMMA NUTTALL (HIGGINSON)*

You face resistance in many areas of life. Resistance, put simply, stops you from getting things done. It's the excuses and justifications of why you should be doing anything other than the project you are resisting.

Resistance is the voice in your head that tells you you're not good enough or smart enough, or that there's not enough time. It's the negative self-talk that feeds your self-doubt. Resistance involves continuing to focus your attention on what no longer serves you, putting your energy into self-limiting behaviours and patterns simply because that is what you have always done.

Resistance reinforces your defence system and encourages you to remain within the safety and security of your comfort zones. Often constructed in childhood, your defence system can protect you from truly feeling unpleasant and sometimes from traumatic thoughts and emotions. Maintaining your defences and only attempting experiences that fit within the constraints of your comfort zone allows you to feel safe. However, resisting change and new experiences may be holding you back from reaching your full potential.

Author and self-help expert, the late Dr Wayne Dyer, taught, "When we stay with the familiar we take no risks. If we don't take risks, we don't have to change and can explain the reason for our lack of growth as a multitude of external circumstances. Comfort keeps us feeling safe, albeit stuck-in-place — and in a place that seldom serves us or those we love, at a higher level. Resistance is a basic part of the fear of changing."

In order to evolve, develop your unique gifts and explore life's possibilities, you must have the courage to pursue your dreams and face challenges head-on.

## When does resistance strike?

You encounter resistance when you embark on a new project that takes a significant amount of effort and motivation. It may

be a health and fitness program, a writing project, a new business venture or an artistic endeavour.

The projects that cause the greatest amount of resistance are often the ones that are the most important to your development. Author of *The War of Art*, Steven Pressfield, remarks, "The more important a call to action is to our soul's evolution, the more resistance we will feel about answering it. But to yield to resistance deforms our spirit. It stunts us and makes us less than we are and were born to be."

Resistance does not only apply to personal endeavours. Judgement and criticism of other people can often be born out of resistance. Rather than face our own insecurities we focus on the perceived weaknesses of others.

Experiencing criticism or negativity from other people towards your ideas can also trigger resistance. If your partner, boss, family or social network are not supportive of your plans or endeavours it's much easier to throw in the towel than to push on unsupported.

Seth Godin, author of *Tribes: We Need You to Lead Us*, advises, "Remarkable visions and genuine insights are always met with resistance. Products, services, career paths — whatever it is, the forces for mediocrity will align to stop you, forgiving no errors and never backing down until it's over. If it were any other way, it would be easy; everyone would do it and your work would ultimately be devalued. The yin and yang are clear: without people pushing against your quest to do something worth talking about, it's unlikely to be worth the journey. Persist."

## What causes resistance?

The number one cause is fear. Fear can take many forms. You may fear failure and be concerned that people will judge you if you fail. You may fear change and not be willing to let go of the labels you identify with or the limitations you place on yourself. For example, "If I'm not always sick/on a diet/working too hard, then who

am I?" Embarking on a bigger life can be overwhelming and fear of the unknown can prevent you from moving forward.

Self-doubt also plays a large role. You may ask yourself, "Who am I to achieve great things or tell people how to live their lives?" Your negative self-talk may insist that you don't have what it takes to succeed and that people won't want to listen to what you have to say.

Financial limitations can also hold you back from many opportunities. However, taking risks does not have to mean risking everything or putting yourself under serious financial strain. It may help to consider strategies such as starting out small, utilising crowd funding or not leaving a day job until the project is well and truly off the ground. It's important to make realistic and well-researched financial decisions. Detailed planning and risk assessments are essential for projects that require large financial commitments.

An often-misunderstood trigger for resistance is when some of the people closest to you attempt to hold you back. They don't stand in your way out of malice or even envy but because they fear they may lose you if you change. When you pursue a new path, create and experience growth, new networks open. Your loved ones may fear being left behind. Resistance encourages you to put your plans aside in response to their fear.

To live your best life, you need to take measured risks and be your authentic self. Don't wait to become the person you think you need to be in order to pursue your dreams. You don't have to be healed or whole or even accepted by others to achieve and create. Pursuing a dream does not have to mean abandoning your current networks and peers or significantly changing your life. That is, unless you want to.

## The many forms of resistance

There are many external enablers of resistance. The Internet, social media, television and various types of technology provide hours of procrastination opportunities. There are endless distractions on offer. There are also countless household chores and low-priority tasks that, although necessary at some point, can derail your efforts to complete an important project.

An overlooked form of resistance is perfectionism. Striving for excellence is admirable and should be encouraged, but setting standards that are so high that their pursuit causes endless stress and anxiety is a waste of valuable time and energy. You may never feel a project is ready, a book is good enough or a painting is finished. Self-doubt is a natural human emotion, but by always trying to be perfect you may be standing in your own way.

Negativity breeds resistance. By focusing on the barriers that stand in the way of achieving an important task, you are much



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less likely to take action. Engaging in negative self-talk, such as constantly telling yourself you will fail or that you aren't good enough, can lead to self-sabotage. A positive mindset is required to inspire positive action.

### Steps for overcoming resistance

**1. Set clear goals and know what drives you**  
It's much easier to keep up the fight against resistance if the goal really matters to you. "That's why it's so critical that you find your why," says online business coach and author, Michael Hyatt. You need to be able to focus on the end game and know the steps you must take to get there.

#### 2. Accept resistance

Accept that resistance will always be a challenge you must face. Understand that it will be there every time you sit down at your desk or pick up your tools.

#### 3. Know your resistance

Recognise what your resistance looks like and know how it feels. It might look like another load of washing, Netflix, an extra hour in bed or even paid work. Resistance can manifest as fatigue, shyness or perfectionism. Know your triggers and learn to recognise the thought patterns that give you permission to justify and delay. Eliminate as many distractions as possible before you sit down to start a project. Set your phone to silent, turn off digital notifications and ensure your workspace is comfortable

and conducive to working. Say no to low-priority tasks so you can focus on what's important.

#### 4. Know you are not alone

Anyone who faces change faces resistance. You are not unique in your behaviour or dysfunctional in any way. Knowing that challenges and feelings of inadequacy are part of the shared human experience can make us feel more connected and less alone.

#### 5. Apply mindfulness

By applying mindfulness and fully experiencing the present moment, you are less likely to devour distractions and yield to resistance.

#### 6. Release judgement

By gaining awareness of judgemental thoughts that arise, towards both yourself and others, and then attempting to replace them with constructive or compassionate thoughts, you not only face resistance but grow and evolve.

#### 7. Gain control over negative self-talk

Reducing negative thinking and developing self-supporting behaviours enables you to build confidence and develop a positive outlook. You can achieve this by listening to your negative self-talk and challenging unhelpful thinking. Setting and achieving small goals, celebrating successes along the way and consciously turning your focus towards your strengths can all contribute to a positive mindset that propels you to pursue your goals and dreams.

### 8. Practise self-compassion and forgiveness

You can only do your best and it's important to forgive yourself when you fail instead of letting that failure define you. If you are compassionate towards yourself you are less likely to exaggerate your failings, emotionally berate yourself or give up completely. Self-compassion provides the space to make mistakes and not be derailed by them. Mistakes are an important part of your development, and learning from them enables you to grow and evolve.

#### 9. Don't live with regret

Imagine all the great works in our world that would not have come to fruition if the artists or entrepreneurs behind the visions had succumbed to resistance. As Pressfield reminds us, "Most of us have two lives. The life we live, and the unlived life within us. Between the two stands Resistance."

#### 10. Sit down and get started!

You can wait until the kids are older, until work isn't as busy, until after the renovations or until the time is right. When will the time be right? Perhaps the time to start is now!

### Resistance is ongoing

Understand that resistance is an ongoing challenge. When you finally sit down and start something, it doesn't necessarily mean you have won the battle. Resistance will be there again tomorrow morning when it's time to commence your project for the day. And the day after, and the day after that. Often, you start a project with passion and commitment but yield to resistance as time goes on. When you start to see real progress, or are close to a breakthrough, resistance often intensifies. "The battle must be fought anew every day," declares Pressfield.

So how do you fight resistance on an ongoing basis? How do you stop resistance fatigue and deciding it's all too hard? Wayne Dyer instructs you to "Work each day on your thoughts. Visualise yourself achieving the goals you have set. Let the image get fixed in your mind."

Work diligently and persist, even on the most difficult days. If you apply the steps for overcoming resistance daily and start each day with the knowledge that resistance will be ready and waiting, hopefully you can continue to win the battle.

You don't need to be an expert, a creative or a genius to achieve greatness. You don't need a big idea before you open your laptop or pick up your paintbrush. It's the people who put in the work, day after day, who succeed. Don't sit around waiting for inspiration to strike. Just get started. As Pressfield suggests, "If all else fails, just show up and do the work."

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