

PERCEPTION STUDIOS

it's what you think

Overcome Resistance

Thrive 2013

*Hosted by Margaret Lukens, owner
New Leaf + Company*

with Shannon Wilkinson
life coach | change artist | summit seeker

What is resistance?

Resistance is that feeling that you know you have to do something but you don't want to do it. Or there's something you want to do, but every time you think about it, you're flooded with yeah, buts.

The feeling that it's not easy. That it's going to take a mountain of willpower to get this thing done, and you can't quite seem to muster it.

There's active resistance, where you spend a fair amount of time thinking about it and not wanting to do it, probably rationalizing why you aren't doing it. There's also a quieter kind of resistance – when you're reminded of the thing you need or want to do, and you don't even begin to think about it, rather, you immediately put it out of your mind and do something else.

The irony is that the way we typically try to overcome resistance – by pushing through and making ourselves do something – is the exact opposite of what really helps. There's a lot of paradox in resistance.

It doesn't matter exactly how resistance shows up for you, only that you recognize it as resistance. Because only after you recognize it can you do something about it.

The Paradox in Resistance

Resistance is an internal conflict where there are two parts of you that seem to want this similar thing, and perceive that you have to go about getting it in different ways.

As an example, if you want to be exercising, but hate getting sweaty, it's hard to make those things mesh together, so the path of least resistance wins out. And that doesn't necessarily mean the easiest thing, but the thing you're most comfortable with.

This paradox is the key to melting your resistance, to shifting the pattern so that you can do the things that need to be done and the things you want to be doing.

Start with that Paradox or Conflict

As I've been exploring resistance with my clients and myself, I've found there's usually a first level fear, and then below that is a deeper concern, and it's usually quite a paradox.

PERCEPTION STUDIOS

it's what you think

The resistance never really goes away if you don't get deeper than the first level.

For instance, as I've talked about on these calls and on my blog, I really want to establish strong habits and routines that support me, bring me more freedom and ease, and help me get done the things I want to get done.

The first level of resistance is that I'm concerned that habits and routines will squelch my freedom and flexibility. If I have this kind of structure in my life, then it will make it impossible to have flexibility and creativity.

Resistance seems very black and white

With all my exploration into this subject, I know that black and white statement isn't actually true. There is a whole range of possibilities in between those two ends of the spectrum.

Recognizing this, and really believing it, has helped the surface level of resistance to melt away. However, I kept finding myself experiencing resistance. Digging down deeper, I discovered a concern that I will become dependent on these habits and routines and if I don't follow them exactly, I won't be able to do the things I really want to do.

When you look at this concern, multiple paradoxes become apparent, such as the idea that I shouldn't do it all, because I might get too dependent.

Reminds me of a friend who felt his father was too rooted in habits. He always, always always took the same way home each day. If his routines were disrupted, then he was out of sorts and didn't like it. So my friend, who didn't want to be like his dad, made it a point of always taking a different way home. He never drove the same route two days in a row. The irony of course is that his pattern was as much a habit or routine as his dad's was. His freedom and choice was constricted by needing to do things a certain way, in this case, differently each day.

And like that, my complicated process of resisting routines is also a habit.

This is part of the problem. Our mind counts all these machinations as actions towards the goal. So you feel like you're already putting effort towards what you want, except that those efforts are unlikely to be fruitful. Yet another paradox!

What can you do?

1. Discover what you're really resisting:

Delve in and see if you can go a couple levels deep, get to the heart of the resistance.

What are you trying to gain? Remember, there's always a positive intention, even if the outcome isn't desirable!

2. Check in with your purpose for doing the thing you've been resisting:

What are you trying to gain from doing it? What's the positive intention?

PERCEPTION STUDIOS

it's what you think

3. *Are there any similarities between the resistance and the goal?*

At this point, you may notice that some of the resistance fades. The recognition that there are deep similarities between what you want to be doing and what you're actually doing, may begin to melt some of the resistance.

At the same time, when you really dig into why this is important to you, you may discover that you don't really want what you thought you did, or that there's a different way to go about doing it, and getting what you want at a deeper level.

Moving forward without triggering the resistance

If you decide it is something you really want (or need) to do, then start small. Really, really, really small. So small that you don't trigger the resistance.

Get connected to those high value gains you want, then ask yourself, in the context of this project or endeavor, what's one tiny trivial thing I can do?

You might be experiencing resistance to small steps. And notice the paradox in that resistance: You aren't doing much of anything currently, and yet it feels like small steps won't be enough, so you resist them, yet they will be more than you have been doing up until this point.

Resistance often comes up with big radical changes

That's why going small, going trivial, works. If you feel the resistance, the step you want to take is still too big.

Why does this work?

You're developing a tolerance for the thing you've been resisting. You're also creating an opportunity to embrace, maybe even enjoy, the small thing's positive intention, without getting freaked out by the big thing.

To come up with the small resistance melting steps, try asking yourself the same question repeatedly and act on the answers.

The question can be quite simple, such as:

- What would I like to write today?
- What would nourish and fuel me?
- How would I like to move my body?
- What would I love to get finished?
- What would I love to be doing?
- What can I do that will give me a feeling of accomplishment?

To lessen the possibility for resistance to show up, when you're going after something you want, keep these principles in mind:

- Know your goal – understand why it really matters to you

PERCEPTION STUDIOS

it's what you think

- Create *and* follow a plan – it doesn't have to be elaborate, but knowing what you need to do really helps
- Build a base at the beginning – keep it small and doable as you gain experience and build new habits
- Intensify over time, as your skills improve – challenge yourself to steer clear of [ruts](#)
- Cut yourself slack, you aren't going to be able to do every single step perfectly – know that, be okay with it and keep going
- Enlist the help of other people – don't underestimate the power of [having people in your corner](#)

I'd love to hear how you've used this process. You can share, ask questions and make suggestions for future Explore & Play topics. Simply visit the [Perception Studios Facebook](#) page or the [Explore & Play page](#) on my site, and scroll down to the form, or email me directly at: shannon@perceptionstudios.net

Thanks for exploring & playing along!