



Adaptive Action and Immunity to Change

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We learn a great deal from the gifted professionals who come to us as learners. We learn the most when our programs include Adaptive Action Labs. In these facilitated sessions, people bring their most wicked issues, learn and apply HSD models and methods, and leave with practical and compelling action plans. Recently, one of our Adaptive Action Learning Teams in the health care sector came up with a great idea. Their challenge was to bridge the gap between what people KNOW about wellness and prevention and what they DO to protect health. During their cycles of Adaptive Action, the group discovered:

- Training and information dissemination rarely help. Everyone knows what a healthy lifestyle looks like, but merely knowing the facts seldom brings behavior change.
- The problem is pervasive. Literature and evidence from around the world echo the same experience of these curious and committed health care leaders. Change in knowing does not lead to change in doing.
- New theory and practice apply principles of neuroscience to the challenges of change and resistance to change. From David Rock they learned about the [SCARF](#) model of individual resistance to change. With Lisa Lahey they explored [Immunity to Change](#). Both approaches supported realistic action to respond to individual resistance.
- This apparent resistance appeared at all levels of the system. Individuals diagnosed with diabetes don't shift their diets. Teams that are over-worked and over-stressed don't choose to slow down. Organizations that challenge employees' capacity to balance work and home don't shift their expectations. Communities with aging populations and increasing chronic illness do not encourage change policies to promote exercise.
- Adaptive Action could help them turn these bits of knowledge into meaningful action.

This month's tool represents their work as they began to analyze the underlying dynamics of patterns they were seeing in the system, as described by the SCARF model.

They will further refine, test, and implement this innovation across their system. It marries neuroscience and human systems dynamics into a simple, yet powerful tool. Anyone can use it to see, understand, and influence patterns of resistance for themselves or others. Consider the simplicity and power of the tool. Test it on your most wicked change challenge. Let us know how it works, then start your next adaptive action.

Until next time,

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What? <i>Rock's resistance to change²</i>	So what? <i>Patterns appear in response to _____.</i> <i><fill in with the change that is being resisted></i>	Now what? <i>Can we do to shift and ease those patterns of resistance?</i>
Status <i>(People resist change because they are trying to maintain their status, or identity, in the group.)</i>		
Certainty <i>(People resist change because they want/need more certainty or clarity of expectations, in the system than the change represents.)</i>		
Autonomy <i>(People resist change because they fear the loss of autonomy, or the ability to make their own decisions, that might be associated with the change.)</i>		
Relationship <i>(People resist change because they fear the loss or alteration of meaningful connections with others.)</i>		
Fairness <i>(People resist change because they suspect a lack or loss of fairness in the system.)</i>		

¹ Kegan, R. & Lahey, L. (2009). *Immunity to Change: How to overcome it and unlock the potential in yourself and your organization*. Boston: Harvard Business School Publications.

² Rock, D. (2009) *Your Brain at Work: Strategies for overcoming distraction, regaining focus, and working smarter all day long*. NY: Harper Business.