

The Resistance Reversal Blueprint

by

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Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Primal Resistance	3
Influence & Resistance	7
The Negative Logic of Positions	11
Illogical & Impractical Decision-Making	12
Damaged Relations	13
Slow Progress	14
Examining the Core System	17
The Problem of Perception	22
I. Confidence & Trust	30
II. Determine Your Subject's Intention/s	31
III. Nip Argumentative Behavior in the Bud	33
IV. See Your Impact on Your Subject	35
V. Be Genuinely Interested	38
VI. Escaping the Dungeon of Emotions	41
Conclusion	44

Introduction

“People don’t resist change. They resist being changed.”

- Peter M. Senge

“Where there is power, there is resistance.”

- Michel Foucault

Primal Resistance

In the Bay of Bengal there exists a group of islands collectively known as the Andaman Islands.

These small islands have canopy-like habitats and as one can imagine, it can be incredibly difficult to live in isolated islands without the aid of public highways, access to healthcare, education, etc. Within this group of islands is a place called the North Sentinel Island.

The North Sentinel Island is home to the Sentinelese people, which has been called the most isolated tribe in the world.

The members of the Sentinelese tribe look just like their neighboring tribes living in other parts of the Andaman Islands in the Bay of Bengal. However, there exists a most crucial difference: **for 60,000 years or so, the Sentinelese people have completely resisted contact with the outside world.**

The Sentinelese have avoided communicating or even coming into close proximity with researchers and even the Indian military. They are very hostile and they are known to charge with weapons such as bows and arrows when they see a boat or helicopter coming close to the beach.



The usual hostile “greeting” of the Sentinelese people when outsiders are seen approach their island home.

Their message is clear: we do not want you here.

No one is allowed to come near North Sentinel Island because of the hostile nature of the people living there. Not even the Indian government can force the Sentinelese people to reveal themselves to the modern world and in the end, everyone decided that it would be best to simply leave the Sentinelese people to their own devices, where they are happiest.



A Sentinelese warrior armed with a bow who went out to charge at a helicopter that was checking North Sentinel Island after a destructive typhoon in 2004.

Why do the Sentinelese people resist contact with the outside world?

There are many theories that attempt to explain why the Sentinelese people behave the way they do. Some conclude that isolation has greatly affected the mindset of this tribe and a very strong “us versus them” mentality exists, which bars them from thinking of the benefits of trade and contact with the outside world.

Another theory states that some tribes are culturally averse to contact with other “tribes” and there’s no point in applying Westernized social classifications to a group of people who have developed their own way of understanding the world.

The third theory states that the Sentinelese people are likely survivors of a much larger tribe that may have lived elsewhere.

Scientists believe that the Sentinelese people have inhabited the same canopy-covered island for 60,000 years or even more. While this is a plausible theory, it may also be true that the main tribal group had lived elsewhere and had encountered “outsiders” who performed acts of violence against them.

The Sentinelese people who presently live in North Sentinel Islands may be the remaining survivors of a much larger tribe that managed to escape

complete decimation. The Indian government estimates that there are only 300-400 Sentinelese people inhabiting the North Sentinel Island.

As such, contact with the outside world may have been indelibly associated with death and this belief has been burned into the minds of this group of people and they find no reason to abandon their belief because they have survived for so long on their own.

This theory rings true for other Andamese tribes who have suffered from contact with the outside world. Apart from being abused by people with commercial interests, other Andamese tribes were unable to acculturate themselves properly after exposure to the “modern world”.

Apart from the obvious difficulties of having a wide language gap with modern Indians, Andamese peoples have been unable to integrate with the larger bands of society most likely because of material poverty.

Which brings us to the ironic question: is contact really the best thing for this isolated tribe or is it a death wish that the Sentinelese wish to delay for as long as they can?

Influence & Resistance

In the previous section, we explored the depth of resistance that a single group of people can exert upon those who wish to make contact with them, which ironically includes the national government of India. The story about the Sentinelese features one of the most primal instincts of humans: resistance.

Resistance is defined as *“the refusal to accept or comply something.”* A second definition of resistance is *“to prevent something from taking place through action or argument.”*

Resistance, by its very definition is an anathema to the art of influence because it prevents the persuasive process from coming full circle. If you are an influencer, resistance is the first and probably biggest stumbling block that you will ever encounter in different social interactions.

Resistance can slice the communication cycle in half if you don't overcome it quickly!

This book is all about resistance, its nature and ultimately, how to overcome it in all its common forms. When your goal is to be as persuasive and influential as possible, you will not be able to advance without mastering resistance.

Resistance stands in the way of every influencer who has ever set his/her sights on a powerful goal that will benefit everyone involved.

Resistance can come from anywhere and it can change your subject's mindset about your message or proposal at any time. The only way that you can prevent resistance from dismantling your 'influence machine' is by extinguishing it the moment it makes itself known.

Luckily, influencers are very much capable of dismantling resistance without resorting to hostile communication strategies: they only need the counter-language that would neutralize all forms of resistance and that is exactly what we're going to explore in this book. The adventure begins in the next chapter!

Chapter 1

Before you can begin exploring the elements of counter-resistance, you need a logical foundation that will help you understand and anticipate resistance tactics and other negative and aversive behavior patterns that can easily block you from influencing or persuading others.

Whenever you encounter resistance while dealing with a subject, you will be required to continually adjust your position as an influencer-negotiator. Your capacity to negotiate ethically will have a large impact on your success rate as an influencer.

Do influencers have to resort to negotiation every time there is resistance?

Negotiation is unavoidable in the context of counter-resistance, unless you intend to use brute force or power to obtain the result/s that you want. The problem with using brute force is that it often reduces a person's credibility and more often than not, it can mean violating a person or group's sense of freedom and choice.

The entire history of human civilization is proof that brute force is the worst possible solution to resistance, especially if the resistance involves beliefs and values.

This book is about the alternate route – the road less travelled. Instead of utilizing brute force or unethical manipulation, we are going to focus on strategies that dismantle resistance through logic, language and behavioral adjustments.

In the long term, the art of influence can bring you wonderful advantages such as unshakable credibility and being seen as a natural leader or authority figure within your social circles.

The Negative Logic of Positions

The most common reaction to resistance during an interaction is to establish a fixed position with relation to the opposing party. A fixed position, like a pin tacked onto a map, is a rigid representation of where the speaker wants to go whether the other party likes it or not.

Is position-taking the best recourse for influencers who encounter resistance?

While position-taking is the easiest option it is not necessarily *the best*. We will revisit and explore this important point later on. For now, you need to know *why* position-taking is a bad idea especially if you are actively trying to persuade or influence a person or group of people.

Now, the first thing that you have to remember as an influencer is that you always have to strive for the best possible outcome even in the worst situations. You need to evaluate situations based on specific sets of criteria that will then guide you to ideal solutions.

Are there any criteria that apply to overcoming resistance?

The ideal solution to social resistance should fit these standards:

1. The solution is mutually beneficial to all parties concerned.
2. The solution is the best possible recourse based on the needs of the interacting parties and the resources available. Questions of practicality, realistic expectations and achievable goals can be brought up to test the soundness of the solution based on this criterion.

3. The solution should be as efficient as possible given the present limitations of the situation and what each party can bring to the negotiation table.
4. The solution should not have a negative impact on the relationship between the parties concerned. At the very least, the solution should be able to minimize any friction and disadvantages between the individuals or groups who are attempting to reach a sensible middle ground.
5. The solution has the quality of hardness or durability. This means that any solution created after the manifestation of conflict should be able to remedy the problem in the long term. Short term solutions can be deemed acceptable as long as the solution remains mutually beneficial to all concerned.

How does position-taking affect the speaker-influencer and his/her subject?

You should never take positionality within a dialogue for granted because the very act of taking and defending a stance/position can automatically put you at a disadvantage. Here are the reasons why:

Illogical & Impractical Decision-Making

Only a few things in this world can match position-taking when it comes to pushing reasonable people into making unreasonable decisions. When you take it upon yourself to create and hold on to a position within a conversation, you will do everything you can to defend that position, even if it means making unreasonable demands or saying irrational things.

What is unfortunate in this situation is that the more you defend your position, the less likely your subject will accept.

A rigid position within an argument can trigger a mirror response in your subject. In the end, you will have to deal with an endless tug-of-war which

could have been avoided if you chose not to stringently defend your chosen stance.

Why do people end up defending their position instead of just finding a common ground with the other party?

The answer to this vital question can be found in the way the human mind operates. The conscious part of the mind, the ego, has a tendency to hold its ground no matter what the cost.

When you begin associating yourself with a particular stance, the ego latches on to the stance and pours every bit of cognitive resource available to make sure that it comes out on top. Sometimes, by brute force, the other party is overpowered and compliance is established.

But then again, how many times can you expect brute force to work? Will it work when you're talking to your manager or boss? Will brute force help persuade an angry spouse? Obviously not – and so we are back to the premise that brute force is never the answer to resistance, ever.

Damaged Relations

When two or more parties engage in a dialogue, they naturally want things to end well by arriving at an acceptable conclusion to the interaction. Unfortunately, an acceptable conclusion to a dialogue is rarely on a horizon when negotiating parties are more concerned with dominating one another.

The attempt to dominate another person through the blind defense of a stance is like forcing two mismatched puzzle pieces together: something will inevitably be worn down in the end. Personal and professional relations are often damaged, sometimes beyond repair, when positionality is prioritized over good relations.

Consider the following scenario where two people just don't see eye to eye:

Sam: *Randy, the mock-up you made is just not up to specs.*

Randy: *Okay, well you didn't say anything about it when you received my folder this morning.*

Sam: *Are you trying to pin this on me? I was talking to our Japanese clients this morning. I even brought them out for lunch. I was busy Randy, unlike other people in this office.*

Randy: *So what do you want from me, exactly?*

Sam: *I want you to do the right thing. I want you to take this mock-up and fix it so it will be ready for our Japanese clients tomorrow morning at 6 AM.*

Randy: *6 AM tomorrow? Our office isn't even open until 7!*

Sam: *That's not my problem Randy. It's your problem. This isn't my mock-up, it's your mock-up. You know that we can't send it out like this. Not in this form.*

Randy: *Fine. I'll do it.*

Analysis:

The sample dialogue you've just read follows a very common tack used by authority figures to force people to comply. In the end, Randy complies but at what cost? Do you think Randy feels good about complying with Sam's request or is the reality actually the other way around?

At the outset you can see how Sam positions himself as the 'undeniable authority' by pointing out that Randy's work was deficient and therefore unusable. Initially, Randy had wanted to help Sam but the latter continued to make negative assertions about Sam's work and even his overall participation in the project.

The straw that broke the camel's back was the brusque way that Sam dismissed Randy's arguments by giving a direct command to produce a new mock-up at 6 AM the next morning. This command communicates that Sam is not only deficient in his work but he is also isn't entitled to any rest that night because of what he's done.

Sam's statement "*That's not my problem Sam. It's your problem*" reinforces his position within the argument and Randy does the same, though he was unable to defend it presumably because Sam was his immediate superior.

Slow Progress

Why does strict position-taking slow down the progress of dialogue?

If you want to solve a problem the soonest possible time, *don't* make a conscious effort to defend or make your stance look better. Problem-solving is different from "bargaining" which often occurs in dialogues where participants have become hardened defenders of their *own perspectives and beliefs*.

People generally cannot accomplish two different things at once so what usually happens is that opposing parties *only* succeed in defending their POVs but they fail in actually arriving at an acceptable solution to the problem at hand.

Position-taking also exerts an unhealthy amount of pressure on all the parties involved. This unnecessary pressure can make people even more irrational and impulsive. As you can see, it's difficult if not impossible to remain positive and constructive if the dominant mindset of the people involved in a dialogue is focused on dominance.

Chapter 2

In order to successfully transition from strict position-centeredness to **flexible and adaptable solution-centeredness**, you need to have a thorough understanding of how resistance emerges and why it manifests in the first place.

Comprehending the psychology of resistance as it applies to day to day interactions will give you a powerful boost as an influencer because you will no longer be at a loss as to why people think, speak and behave in a certain manner when they don't agree with your message. This section discusses individual facets/dimensions of resistance and what you can do to adapt to them.

Examining the Core System

When your subject resists you and your message, he/she doesn't do it out of the pure desire to oppose you. A person's resistance is actually shaped and motivated by what I'd like to call the **core system**.

A person's core system is composed of his/her central beliefs, values, mental lenses, biases and even the dominant spectrum of emotions that a person experiences in different situations.

Each individual is informed by his/her own unique core system. There's no way to "step out" of one's core system because it is the most genuine representation of who a person really is.

How can you use your subject's core system to your advantage?

Despite the marked differences between people's core systems, there are also universal similarities between them. These similarities can be used to level the playing field when your subject is resisting your message:

1. People generally believe that a mutually beneficial solution or conclusion is the best possible outcome when two or more parties are unable to agree in the beginning.

While it's true that some people are unethical and one-sided when it comes to obtaining advantages during negotiations, the majority of individuals are quite the opposite – they want everyone to benefit from the interaction.

2. People are more likely to accept your message if they trust you. Think of how much your subject trusts you at the moment. Does your subject perceive you as a natural leader?

If not, you have to project your expertise in such a way that your subject would want to follow your lead because he/she sees an obvious advantage or benefit in doing so. On the flipside, if your subject sees that you're not interested in mutual benefit, he/she may continue resisting you despite your leadership efforts.

3. There is a much higher chance of compliance if your subject sees you as an ally or friend. People tend to have a very dualistic approach when it comes to comprehending the world at large.

This tendency can be seen most clearly in commonly accepted binaries such as “good vs. bad”, “ugly vs. beautiful”, “rich vs. poor”, etc. While these binaries are very limited and oftentimes inaccurate in portraying real life, people still subscribe to them because they make reality more manageable and comprehensible.

It can take a very long time to debunk dualistic beliefs so your best option would be to use them to your advantage instead. One of the most common dualisms that people subscribe to is “*if you're not a friend then you're most likely an enemy*”. If you can show your subject that you're on his/her side even if your beliefs aren't completely aligned, you can substantially reduce resistance.

This is one of the most effective ways to get someone to lower their guard, even in the most pressurized of situations.

4. People want to feel good about their thoughts, decisions and actions. Cognitive reframing can come in handy when you're maximizing this opening a person's core system.

Normally, a resistant individual will view the speaker's message in a negative light. Since it's a 'bad idea', accepting or complying with it automatically becomes a form of punishment.

The idea of willingly submitting oneself to a punishing activity is in direct contradiction with the mind's natural design which is geared toward the acquisition of resources and the enjoyment of pleasurable activities.

You can use techniques such as cognitive reframing to change a resistant subject's perception of your idea or message. Here's a sample scenario that illustrates how you can use reframing to persuade a resistant subject:

Dad: *We have to go to the dentist soon. That molar has been giving you a lot of pain lately.*

Child: *No! No way! Dentists are crazy scary. They have drills and who knows what else. No way!*

Dad: *I agree that dentists have tools like dental drills, which they use to remove dirt from teeth. I also agree that dentists have other tools which they use in removing bad teeth.*

Child: *I don't want to. It's going to hurt a lot!*

Dad: *It might hurt a lot but it's better to hurt once and never to feel toothache again. You've been crying about your molar for 2 weeks now. So it's up to you: be in pain for weeks or months or let the dentist remove the bad tooth? The pain might get worse.*

Child: *What, it's not going to go away on its own?*

Dad: *Sometimes...When it's not serious. But it can get worse. Often it gets worse especially if there are cavities and infection.*

Child: *That sounds awful. I'm going to the dentist. I don't want any more pain.*

Dad: *I'll come with you! Don't worry about the dentist. Worry about the tooth that's causing all the pain.*

Analysis:

Let's perform a close analysis of the scenario so we can see how the father boosted his persuasiveness by using cognitive reframing. The dialogue began with the father stating the desired action and the rationale behind it. The subject immediately refused and resisted the idea, citing pain as the primary reason for the adamancy to visit the dentist.

Instead of immediately using his parental authority, the influencer used a compliance tactic by using the words "I agree". This can be seen clearly in the statement "*I agree that dentists have tools like dental drills, which they use to remove dirt from teeth.*"

This statement of agreement doesn't actually agree with anything that the subject has said so far. It merely reframes the topic in a way that fear is ejected from the equation (e.g. it's normal for a professional dentist to have tools to use for dental procedures). Agreeing or acknowledging your subject is a viable first step when you're attempting to break down his/her resistance.

By saying that you agree with your subject, your subject's conscious resistance to you as an influencer will be reduced because you've spoken the 'magic words' – *I agree with you.*

The next technique that the influencer used was contrasting: *It might hurt a lot but it's better to hurt once and never to feel toothache again. You've been*

crying about your molar for 2 weeks now. So it's up to you: be in pain for weeks or months or let the dentist remove the bad tooth? The pain might get worse.

Notice that the father never directly argued with his child. Instead, he offered the child a choice between long-term pain and short-term pain. The father knew that if he told his child that there wasn't going to be any pain, his child's trust will most likely disappear the moment the dentist starts picking at the bad tooth.

Like the father in the scenario, you should also be very concerned when there's a chance that your subject's trust will disappear as a result of your words and actions.

Never sacrifice a person's trust just to get him/her to comply immediately with you. There are long-term consequences to this type of persuasion and unfortunately, many of them are negative in nature.

5. People want to be understood from their perspective, not yours. There's an old movie cliché where the leading lady becomes all dreamy and exclaims "*I love him so, because he understands me!*" As cliché as this line may sound, it's one cliché you should never forget when dealing with a resistant individual.

Being able to show that you understand the situation from your subject's viewpoint can be a powerful counter-resistance technique.

Empathy immediately builds goodwill between two people or groups, even if both parties are unable to immediately agree on something. It is very important that you place yourself in your subject's shoes before 'attacking' the source of the resistance.

Elicit feedback from your subject and be sure to pay attention to the individual details that will reveal what your subject is experiencing and why he/she is refusing in the first place. Doing so will allow you to zero in

on the actual problems that are preventing you from persuading your subject.

This technique is especially useful in dealing with inner resistance or hidden resistance. Hidden resistance are objections that are not directly voiced out or expressed by people. They stay hidden from sight until the person finds it necessary to reveal them. Often, influencers have to deal with two parallel lines of resistance: external or 'voiced-out' resistance and inner/hidden resistance.

External resistance and inner resistance are often inextricably associated with each other. Inner resistance often represents the true/genuine rationale behind a person's objections to an idea. Because of this, it is vital that you are able to access it because you may end up wasting your energy on a decoy objection instead of addressing the actual source of the objections.

The Problem of Perception

We all know that a person's perception plays a key role in determining what he/she accepts and rejects when he/she receives old and new information. Perception, just like everything else, is informed by a person's beliefs and values or his/her core system.

When you set out to persuade or influence another person, what usually happens is that you try to make your subject see things from your point of view (POV). Sometimes this works especially if your subject already trusts you as a natural leader.

What happens if you need to persuade someone whom you've just met?

Many professionals in the different industries find themselves unwittingly thrown into situations where they have to be the speaker-influencer and yet,

they don't know how the first thing about shifting another person's perception.

So what they try to do is they try to transplant their POV by engaging in 'games of dominance' where they try to prove that their position or idea is better than their subject's.

As we've discussed before, this won't work because position-centeredness creates more problems than it solves. Instead of facilitating agreement, taking and defending a position actually makes all parties less likely to comply with one another.

How can you approach the problem of perception like a true influencer?

First of all, perception isn't monolithic at all. A person's perception is dynamic and it can change easily depending on the situation and the input a person is receiving from the environment.

Perception represents not just a person's dominant view about a topic or idea but his/her entire train of thought.

A person's train of thought can be as complex as a puzzle or as simple as the alphabet. However, you cannot disentangle a person's entire train of thought about a certain idea. That takes years of ideological work (think of religious institutions or the educational system) and many influencers simply don't have the resources or time for this type of approach.

What you can do as an influencer is to change what lies at the forefront of your subject's mind.

I call this surface perception or SP because it's what a person uses to contend with reality directly. Surface perception is like the summary of the entire train of thought that supports a person's resistance to an idea.

The rest of the thought train remains hidden in the subconscious mind. Again, surface perception (SP) is not a single idea or view. It's a collection of tightly-knit and closely-related views/lenses that give rise to compliance or resistance.

What's the next step?

After you've accessed and understood the surface perception of your subject regarding your message, the next logical step is to analyze the similarities and differences of your SP and your subject's SP.

When perception blocks your path as an influencer you can be 100% certain that there is a misalignment between your message and the subject's perception of the object (the subject of your message).

Here are some examples of misaligned perceptions that can drastically affect the outcome of a dialogue:

Influencer Says: *"This car has less than 100,000 miles on it and we've just rebuilt the air conditioning and radiator some weeks ago. It's like brand new!"*

Subject Hears: *"This is a piece of junk that we had to repair so much none of its original parts are intact. But you won't know that and I won't tell."*

Influencer Says: *"You need to study harder if you want to make it big when you grow up."*

Subject Hears: *"You can't even get decent grades. You're not a good student at all."*

If your subject is objecting to your message, you can be certain that there is some degree of misalignment. Here are the steps that will help you fix the **perceptual misalignment** between you and your subject:

1. Keep Listening & Asking Questions – This is self-explanatory. You won't be able to make sense of what your subject is feeling/thinking if you're not an active listener.

Active listening requires the influencer to suspend his/her desire to be the center of the conversation. Instead, you need to put the subject at the center (listen more than speak) and empathize with your subject as much as possible so you can comprehend his/her behavior from his/her POV.

2. Distinguish Between Subjective Perception & Objective Reality – You must always keep in mind that people in general (yes, even you!) have a tendency to “cherry pick” facts and truths to create a subjective perception of the world at large.

Your subject's objections are the least of your problems. Objections are just expressions of a deeper problem that involves not just perception but logic. You see, people often think that their subjective perception of reality is reality. The map is never the territory!

Your subject's perception is actually a roadmap that he/she created to understand objective reality. You have your own roadmap – but it doesn't mean that your subject will drop his/her roadmap in favor of yours.

The solution: go up one level higher by encouraging your subject to create a new roadmap with you.

Telling your subject that your roadmap of reality is superior or more acceptable will only harden his/her resolve to defend his/her subjective perception of the issue at hand. Position-taking kills the momentum, so avoid it at all costs.

Instead, propose an objective standard that you can both agree on.

If your proposal or message is ethical and mutually beneficial to all concerned, it shouldn't be difficult for you to derive an objective standard based on your message.

This leads us to step three: proposing the new objective standard.

3. Reconfigure Subjective Perception By Proposing an Objective Standard – This is the ‘tricky’ part of breaking down a person’s resistance but it will have a very positive impact on the proceedings if you’re able to succeed.

You can propose a new, objective standard by asking a series of questions that will wear down the logic of the other party’s subjective perception.

Notice that we’re not interested in directly contesting or arguing with your subject. What we are really interested in is how long your subject’s logic will survive the “litmus test” of the new objective standard you have in mind.

Remember: ask questions using the central logic of your objective standard. If you really think that your idea holds water, your subject’s perception will eventually dissolve and once it does, your subject will become more open to the idea of accepting a new subjective perception.

This new subjective perception should never be directly suggested by the speaker-influencer. Instead, allow your subject to reach his/her own conclusions about the issue using the cues that you’ve been dropping from the moment you began asking questions about the subject’s perception of the issue.

By allowing your subject to come up with a new surface perception of the issue, you will be able to actively suppress the conscious filters that are responsible for resisting and rejecting new ideas. The rejection of new ideas often occurs when the novel ideas come from the environment (e.g. other people).

However, the situation is completely different when a person comes up with new ideas without any direct intervention. The conscious mind’s

defenses are lowered and the new ideas are able to take root. And the rest as they say, is history!

How can you ensure success when attempting to shift another person's subjective perception of an issue?

If the objective standard that you've set forth is logical and beneficial to both parties, there's no reason for your subject to continue resisting.

Your subject will be doing his/her 'part' by reconfiguring his/her subjective perception. When you have come this far in breaking down your subject's resistance make sure that you don't sabotage your chances. Follow these additional guidelines:

1. Forget Your Anxieties – Your anxieties and fears about what your subject is thinking or planning can cloud your judgment. Objectivity will require you to process negative emotions constructively so you can focus on actually influencing your subject to change his/her mind.

Remember: your fears do not have a one-to-one correspondence with what's actually happening in objective reality. Don't fret or worry – instead, listen and continually adjust your technique until you get your desired outcome.

2. Avoid the Blame Game – If the other party is directly responsible for a misfortune or hassle that still isn't a good reason to use the blame game to make the other party guilty.

More often than not, blame only makes people agitated and more likely to resist you. Why? Because blaming someone is a form of position-taking. If you blame someone, that means you are positioning yourself a tier higher than the other party because you're accusing the other party of insufficiency or wrongdoing.

Again, this approach will only slow down progress and it will not directly improve your chances of persuasion.

There are even some situations where the blame game actually triggers complete abandonment of the speaker-influencer. Imagine your subject saying “*I’ve had enough*” and just walking away. Who really wins or loses in this type of situation?

3. Be An Open Influencer – Being an influencer doesn’t mean that you have to close yourself off to other options or routes. If you want to elicit usable feedback from your subject, you have to be willing to become an ideal subject yourself.

You are your subject’s subject, too!

Most of the time, honesty is sufficient to convince the other person that you’re not planning anything that would eventually cause detriment. Being honest about your aims is not the same as giving in or anything like that. You’re being honest for the sake of honesty and goodwill between you and your subject.

Of course, there will be times when you have to purposefully withhold some information to amplify the effectiveness of your persuasion technique (e.g. when you’re using storytelling as a persuasive device) but that’s not the same as deceiving your subject into believing something that simply isn’t true.

Chapter 3

Now that we're more familiar with the psychology of resistance, it's now time to examine the elements of counter-resistance that you can use to break down resistance as it emerges during a social interaction.

Each section of this chapter will cover one major technique or guideline in reversing resistance through the use either behavioral adjustments or verbal/linguistic adjustments.

Keep in mind that you should never apply these strategies and techniques mechanically – you have to examine the details of the interaction carefully before ‘mixing and matching’ the right approaches based on the feedback that you get from your subject.

Again, active listening and eliciting feedback are two of the most important tools in your influencer's arsenal.

Keep your ears open for any changes in your subject's tack especially if objections are already out in the open. Focus on determining why your subject is behaving or speaking in a particular manner and you will be able to see the deeper roots of a person's resistance to your message.

I. Confidence & Trust

What do you do when your subject begins doubting your knowledge or expertise?

This is probably one of the most difficult situations that you will encounter as an influencer.

When your subject begins questioning what you know, a whole spectrum of negative emotions begin to chip away at your confidence. Sometimes, another person's doubts can make an influencer doubt his/her own

expertise. It's unusual but it does happen especially if the influencer is unable to satisfactorily respond to the subject's questions about the issue.

The only solution to this problem is to remain confident no matter what. You can accomplish this by following these simple tips:

1. Stick to what you know! Avoid leading the conversation to aspects of the issue that you are not familiar with. Your subject may be allowing you to lead him/her to 'new territory' because he/she is more familiar of it than you.

You are as much as a subject to the other person as he/she is to you. Remember that your subject is also studying and analyzing what you're saying especially after an objection has been laid out.

When a person objects to something, his/her conscious mind goes into overdrive and every bit of information (vocal, verbal and nonverbal) is 'scanned' or analyzed by your subject's conscious filters.

2. Restate information to take control of the conversation. If your subject is forcing you to discuss information that you're not familiar with, backtrack and restate a previous piece of information that you are completely knowledgeable about. Restate the information and gently encourage your subject to acknowledge it before proceeding with your argument.

Remember to keep the conversation constructive, too. Position-taking may be an easy recourse but you will notice that the more you stick to a single position within the conversation, the harder it will be to convince the other person to comply with you.

3. Prepare yourself for anxiety and stress. Anxiety and stress are normal reactions to tight or difficult situations. Prepare yourself to process stress and negative emotions during a conversation and don't let these things hijack your efforts in influencing your subject.

Individuals who are unable to take control of stress and anxiety often resort to negative techniques such as the “blame game”.

You cannot remain objective and constructive if you become depressed, anxious or angry with your subject. Manage your emotions and or transform that raw emotional energy to boost your positive momentum.

For example, instead of showing your intense displeasure at your subject’s objections, use the extra adrenaline from anger to deepen the logic of your argument so you can wear down your subject’s perceptive logic. There is always a way to turn a potentially disastrous situation into a constructive and positive one.

II. Determine Your Subject’s Intention/s

Intention is defined simply as an “aim or plan”. When a person thinks, speaks or acts there is always an intention behind the decision to do so. When a person resists or objects to a message, there is always an intention behind that, too!

Intentions can either be simple, complex or mixed.

We must not assume that all intentions are purely good or purely bad. In reality, there is no such thing as a ‘pure’ or unadulterated intention because humans have a natural tendency to integrate their personal interests with everything they do.

Even the most ordinary decisions such as speeding up slightly on the highway to prevent someone from overtaking your car preserves your personal interest.

While the intention might have been ‘innocent’ (e.g. *“It’s my right to position my vehicle where I think it’s safe”*) one’s personal interests informs that intention (e.g. *“I don’t want that guy to think that I’m a slowpoke.”*)

Personal intentions are a lot like machines: they operate within the boundaries and design of the people who brought them to life.

The biggest mistake that an influencer can make is to immediately assume that his/her subject has a negative or ‘evil’ intention. If you haven’t elicited sufficient feedback from your subject, there’s no way for you to know that. Even if you’ve had a bad experience with negotiating with this person in the past, you still need objective proof of his/her actual intentions.

If you jump to conclusions about your subject, you may end up harming your overall efforts in influencing this person. So don’t make unfounded assumptions – ask more questions. Try to see if your subject’s plan of action is properly aligned with his/her ideas. If there is a misalignment between thoughts and action, it’s possible that your subject is hiding his/her true intention from you.

Why do people hide their intentions from others?

A small percentage of individuals do this because they want a one-sided transaction with most of the advantages sliding to their side of the negotiation table. But in the majority of situations, people hide their true intentions because they are simply afraid of negative evaluation.

Negative evaluation by others often sparks social anxiety, which can be crippling to some people. Instead of having to contend with the effects of negative evaluation, many folks try to avoid it the best they can.

Common examples of negative evaluation include being judged as unreasonable and/or incompetent or being humiliated or embarrassed by one or any number of people.

III. Nip Argumentative Behavior in the Bud

Argumentative behavior is the byproduct of strict position-taking which is something that you don't need if you want to succeed in persuading a resistant subject. Arguing with another person often triggers a chain of unsavory tactics such as name-calling and unsubstantiated generalizations/essentialisms.

When you argue with your subject, you also close off the possibility of being genuinely open to your subject's POV, which as we've already discussed is essential to breaking down objections and resistance. Here's a sample scenario where argumentative behavior takes over the entire dialogue:

Jim: *Nothing is going right in this relationship. Everything is going down the drain, even our money is going down the drain!*

Maggie: *Are you blaming me for everything that has gone wrong? I'm always at home waiting for you and you're just out there doing God knows what!*

Jim: *I'm working my fingers to the bone and all I see are new shoes and gadgets we know we can't afford.*

Maggie: *Don't try to pin this on me buster because you know that I also have a job!*

Jim: *Then why did you insist that we have a joint account? And why is our joint account almost completely depleted? I checked! I check everyday!*

Maggie: *You should really get your head straightened out, you're crazy!*

Analysis:

The dialogue you've just read features the key characteristics of communication that has been shattered to bits by argumentative behavior.

Jim begins the conversation by making an unfair evaluation of the relationship by stating an unsubstantiated generalization. You might ask –

if the man is already suffering from the relationship, isn't that sufficient substance for him to react or behave in a negative manner?

The answer to this question is *no*, because what matters during a conversation is not history but what both parties are willing to bring to the negotiation table. If history was sufficient substance for persuasion then the majority of ethical influencers would have a much easier time gaining people's compliance.

But the fact of the matter is that history doesn't dictate a person's behavior during a conversation any more than a steering wheel teaches a man/woman to drive safely.

So despite the possibility of recent history informing the dialogue in the scenario, it has very little impact on the behavior of the two people involved.

After Jim opens the conversation with a very negative assessment of the relationship and indirectly, his partner, Maggie becomes very defensive to the point that she resorts to name-calling: *"You should really get your head straightened out, you're crazy!"*

Argumentative behavior can create a very deep pit of negativity and hostility that can be extremely difficult to escape from.

Sadly, people who are accustomed to negative strategies such as argumentation are unable to see the extent of the damage they cause by using such strategies. Like what we've discussed before, the use of brute force and generally negative communication strategies can get you what you want sometimes, but usually at a very high cost (e.g. loss of trust or credibility).

How do you know that you're already indulging in argumentative behavior?

I consider argumentative behavior a type of vice because many people actually gain pleasure from inflicting negativity on other people.

There are many reasons for this behavior but it is usually informed or shaped by the desire for retribution or “payback”. You would be surprised as to how common (still) the “eye for an eye” mentality is even in large organizations and the corporate setting.

The most common sign that you’re headed down this path is if you start getting thoughts like:

“What a self-centered wretch.”

“Selfish is all you know, that’s why.”

“I hope I’m there to see you when you fail.”

“You’re the most controlling person I know.”

“I would be better off alone forever.”

“You’re like a child, you don’t know what you’re really doing.”

These thoughts are very vindictive and they can really close the influencer’s mind to the possibility of creating a constructive and positive outcome as his/her subject’s ally or friend.

Remember our discussion of trust? Your subject will find it easier to comply if he/she sees you as an ally. Because if you do not project yourself as an ally, you will automatically be categorized as a foe or enemy.

IV. See Your Impact on Your Subject

One of the more ironic truths about human nature is that no matter how much we try to be fair or equal when dealing with others, we will almost always end up being ‘fairer’ to ourselves.

What this means is that we are more likely to give ourselves more allowances when it comes to committing mistakes or behaving negatively in the presence of other people.

If you want to counter resistance effectively by getting your subject to lower his/her guard, you need to start seeing *your impact* on your subject.

People often fail to see personal impact as an important factor when influencing others because this usually requires accepting mistakes and shortcomings while communicating with others. Examining one’s negative impact can also mean being less generous to oneself, which doesn’t sound very attractive to people at all.

As influencers we also tend to over-focus on our intentions and the blueprints of persuasion that we have prepared to obtain the results that we want.

Unfortunately if you do not take impact into consideration, you might end up with a highly resistant subject that won’t think twice about walking away. Why? Because you have to address the impact of your message first before your subject can accept your main message.

Here is a table that dissects the message, what the speaker meant (intention) and personal impact:

Mike	Mike's Intention	Martha	Martha's Intention
<i>"We should get rid of this box of old clothes, it's so moldy that it's a health hazard."</i>	<i>"I want you to live in a healthier environment."</i>	<u>Martha feels hurt</u> when Mike express the desire to throw away an old box of clothes that belonged to her father, who passed away years ago. She responds with <i>"I don't mess with your stuff, so don't mess with mine!"</i>	<i>"Don't throw away something that matters a lot to me."</i>
<u>Mike feels challenged</u> that Martha is resisting his logic. He increases his insistence that she is wrong by adding the element of guilt to the equation: <i>"Is it because this belonged to your dad? Look, I loved your dad to pieces but we're talking about living in a moldy house here. Why don't you think about me and the kids, not just yourself?"</i>	<i>"I want the house to be healthy for everyone and if I have to shock you to accomplish this, fine by me."</i>	<u>Martha is shocked</u> that Mike can be so insensitive to her emotional needs. She begins clamming up, cutting off Mike from the big picture: <i>"I don't want to talk about it. Don't you dare touch that box."</i>	<i>"I want you to leave me alone now."</i>

As you can plainly see from the table, it doesn't take long before a poorly-worded response can make the most noble of intentions seem like the most offensive idea in the world.

When Mike failed to see that he was beginning to hurt Martha's feelings by insisting that they throw away the old box of clothes, Martha became defensive and eventually, she just chose to shut herself off from Mike who had a very one-track mind regarding the old box of clothes.

Whether the box of old clothes was really moldy or a health hazard wasn't the actual issue here. The real issue was how Mike viewed Martha's possessions and Martha's role in determining what is to be kept and what should be thrown away.

Martha's sense of independence and control over her life was unwittingly added to the equation making the situation even more sensitive than it was before.

V. Be Genuinely Interested

Being genuinely interested in your subject doesn't just improve harmony or rapport-building – it also ensures that you are able to utilize a constructive approach to solving the problems blocking your efforts at persuading your subject.

In order to become genuinely interested in your subject, you have to be willing to accept that there might be two or more valid angles in the story and they might not be from *your* POV.

I know that many influencers will find this information unacceptable because influencers are taught early on to hold fast to their beliefs no matter how challenging things get.

However, we should always remember that openness to other ideas does not necessarily mean that you are accepting or expecting ‘defeat’ in the game of persuasion.

Inquisitiveness and openness will actually allow you to gain an advantage over your subject by being able to comprehend the source of the resistance while increasing your connectedness to your subject.

Your level of connectedness to your subject will play a big role in determining the direction of the interaction after the objections have been laid out. Will your subject continue listening to you or will he/she decide to cut the conversation short?

If you have been able to establish a deep sense of connectedness with your subject, the former scenario is very likely. Inversely, if you failed to connect with your subject at a level that will allow you to present yourself as someone whom the subject can trust and listen to, you can expect the opposite to occur.

How is genuineness developed in the course of a conversation?

Admittedly, presenting oneself as a genuinely interested speaker takes time and effort especially if you don’t have a personal connection with your subject outside of the conversation. I have two guidelines that you can follow to naturally increase your genuine interest in what your subject has to say:

First, consider yourself as an observer only and not a judge or evaluator. Listen to your subject with the intent to gain new information.

Second, if you can’t avoid thinking that you’re right and he/she is wrong (this is just an example), consider these thoughts and ideas as educated guesses or hypotheses only. Don’t think of your own ideas as undeniable truths.

If you can follow these two simple guidelines, the following outcomes will naturally emerge from your interaction with your subject:

1. Your subject will *feel* that you want to learn more about his/her story or views. General defensiveness or the desire to protect one's position within the interaction will gradually fade away.
2. You will feel less pressured to 'get things done' because you will become busy analyzing genuine feedback from your subject. This actually makes your job as an influencer easier!
3. Your subject will begin to open up about issues that he/she wasn't willing to share before but because you showed that you can be a good, genuine listener, these issues and ideas will now be revealed to you slowly. Ride the momentum and make sure that you pay 100% attention to your subject from start to finish!

Here are some additional guidelines to "seal the deal" when it comes to presenting oneself as a genuinely interested speaker-influencer:

1. It's easy to ask people to avoid making false assumptions about other people especially if the interaction has made a turn for the worse.

However, from experience, this is simply not possible because even the simple activity of analyzing and creating counter-statements often requires downgrading the other person's logic and this can easily generate a handful of negative assumptions.

So instead of asking you to completely avoid making assumptions, I just want you to be completely honest about them. I want you to share your assumptions with your subject so you can either keep or reject them based on what you learn from your subject.

I'm aware that this can be a tough guideline to follow because we are generally apprehensive about sharing negative views about other people. But if you think about it, if a conversation has already taken a nose dive, being honest can give your subject grounds to 'revive' the interaction.

Why? Because you can be certain that your subject also has negative assumptions about you at this point in time. By being honest and open, you will be able to short-circuit your subject's negative assumptions.

Within the paradigm of influence, these are extremely favorable conditions because if you're able to dissolve even just one negative assumption, your subject's conscious defenses become vulnerable to persuasive language for a period of time.

We can compare a person's conscious defenses to a jigsaw puzzle. When a negative assumption is imploded, a piece of the puzzle is removed and you can actually fit another piece into the resulting gap before your subject is able to create a similar assumption about you or the situation.

2. Before setting out to persuade someone, I also want you to examine your own goals and intentions. Why do you want to persuade the person in the first place? Is there an 'intention behind the intention'?

I'm asking you to perform self-analysis because you have to be aware of your own personal aims before 'heading to war'. If you aren't completely clear about your own intentions, you won't be able to use them properly as guideposts while interacting with your subject.

VI. Escaping the Dungeon of Emotions

Emotions or feelings are the wild horses of the world of influence. They're extremely powerful, beautiful things but unfortunately their beauty is matched equally by their unpredictability.

Social scientists have long concluded that a person who is able to associate positive emotions to persuasive message is a naturally influential person because 99% of the time, people act *based on their emotions* instead of their rational thoughts.

This might come as a surprise to some since we have been focusing on the conscious defenses or “filters”. Conscious mental defenses represent just one side of the equation. The other side is human nature and its crowning glory – our emotions.

What should we do with our emotions so they don't block you from persuading a resistant subject?

First of all, we can't repress another person's emotions any more than we can repress wind from sweeping a prairie landscape. People generate emotions because they *can* and they feel entitled to feel whatever spectrum of emotions they find fitting for a situation.

Every person has a pattern of emotions that he/she usually experiences depending on the situation. This pattern is informed and shaped by a person's upbringing and past experiences.

Severe negative experiences in a person's life can often create searing emotional triggers that are implanted deep into the subconscious mind.

Like landmines, these emotional triggers explode immediately upon contact and it's often very difficult to spot them unless you know someone very well.

Positive emotions are usually not a problem so we have to naturally focus on negative ones like anger, bitterness, sadness, frustration, etc.

An influencer who doesn't know how to manage his/her own emotions and the emotions of his/her subject will find himself/herself trapped in a dungeon created by raw emotions.

This “dungeon of emotions” can drive the best of us to feats of irrationality and can even make the most intelligent people say the worst things that they would probably regret saying later on.

If you have trouble managing emotions or understanding how they fit into the paradigm of persuasion and counter-resistance, you can study the special guidelines I’ve prepared below:

1. Don’t pretend they’re not there. It’s alright to be angry, sad or anxious when talking to someone. Don’t pretend that your emotions don’t exist because nine times out of ten, the worst conflicts are rooted in unresolved emotions. This applies to both the speaker and the subject.

Don’t try to stop your subject from expressing his/her emotions. It might be unpleasant to witness someone expressing negative emotions so just think of the activity as a way of eliciting additional feedback from your subject. Trust me, a controlled flow of emotions is more manageable than a sudden explosion!

As for you the speaker, repressing your emotions or pretending that “you’re fine” can make active listening and eliciting feedback nearly impossible. Your conscious mind will probably drown out all good sense because all you can think about is the raw emotion that wants to come to the surface.

Of course, restraint of oneself is highly valued in modern society and I’m not asking you to verbally abuse your subject. What I’m asking you to do is find a way to express your emotion/s so you can continue progressing in the conversation. Raw, unexpressed emotions are like boulders. The more emotions you hold back, the heavier these boulders become – and you’re carrying them around on your shoulders!

Yet another unintended consequence of repressing emotions is the negative impact it will have on your relationship with your subject. Emotions have a tendency to amplify negativity and distort facts. A little

anger and sadness now may transform into long-term rejection and aversion in the future.

2. Avoid separating the issue from the emotions that come with it. Emotions are natural ‘byproducts’ of human cognition.

In my own analysis, emotions exist to help classify experiences so we can better understand the world. Some emotions can stress the body and mind while some can create a chemical euphoria that people feel like they’re on cloud nine.

The substantial differences between groups of emotions makes them even more relevant to the art of influence.

Why? Because emotions can tell us what our subjects cannot verbally express. To be sensitive to another person’s emotions is to be sensitive to the hidden meanings of a person’s words and behaviors. You wouldn’t want to miss out on that kind of information or insight, trust me!

Another consequence of attempting to remove emotions from the equation is the fact that raw emotions tend to trickle down on a conversation at the most inopportune of times.

So instead of enjoying continuous momentum and progress, you will probably end up having to deal with sudden outbursts from your subject that will completely derail the conversation.

If your subject is already resistant to your message, the frequency of these emotionally-loaded outbursts will increase for as long as you do not directly address the emotions that are trying to catch your attention.

3. Compromise with your emotions. Once you’ve found and understood your emotions and what your subject is feeling about you, the next logical step is to find a middle ground where you can express your emotions

safely. You will discover that once this middle ground is found, being positive and constructive will no longer be a problem.

Conclusion

We have just finished exploring the wide and often rugged terrain of resistance and counter-resistance.

It is my sincere hope that this volume has been able to shed a light on the multitude of factors that you have to take into consideration when attempting to break down another person's resistance through the use of influence/persuasion.

While it's obviously not a very easy process, it's not too difficult either as long as you keep in mind the major elements of resistance such as emotions, dominant behavior, language choice, intention and personal impact.

The path to influence beckons as your tools of influence become ever sharper and stronger.

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