

Meeting and Planning for Resistance



“Every trainer, teacher, professor, facilitator, keynote speaker and curriculum designer encounters resistance. Learners will sometimes resist the content being taught, the way something is presented, the task being asked of them or any number of aspects of a course. Regardless of the type of resistance, one thing is important for use all to know: resistance is normal and should be expected.”

(from Jeanette’s article listed below)

Here are some tips and tools to assist in minimizing resistance in a learning event:

1. **An article by Jeanette Romkema** 
[“10 Ways to Minimize Resistance in a Learning Event”](#) by Jeanette Romkema
2. **A check list** 
[“Minimizing Resistance Checklist”](#) (see page 3)
3. **A workshop by Bert Troughton** 
[“A Dialogue with Resistance”](#)
4. **Two learning tasks** 
[“Meeting and Planning for Resistance”](#) (see page 4)

[“Tough Situations: How to Overcome Resistance”](#) (see page 5)
5. **Some thoughts from Dr. Jane Vella** 
[“Resistance Overcome by Courage”](#) (see page 6)
6. **A course idea** 
[“Deep Democracy”](#)
<http://deep-democracy.net/>



Gain a new and deeper understanding of the dynamics of change resistance and learn how to manage the resulting tensions for improved more sustainable outcomes.

7. **Some web links** 

["Six Causes of Resistance to Learning"](#)

["The Adult Learner: Dealing with Resistance"](#)

["The Wave: A Teaching Tools for Minimizing Resistance"](#)

[Learner-Centered Practice: Five Key Changes to Practice: Responding to Resistance](#) (Chapter 7, p149-159)

[Kurt Lewin's Change Theory in the Field and in the Classroom: Notes Toward a Model of Managed Learning](#)

An article showing the role resistance has in change.



Checklist: Minimizing Resistance

Below you will find a list of ways to minimize and plan for resistance in a learning event. The first 10 are further unpacked in the article "[10 Ways to Minimize Resistance in a Learning Event](#)".

- ✓ When resistance to new content or the teaching method comes, welcome and honour it. Blocking it will only increase its strength.
- ✓ Be transparent about why and when you are doing things then way you are.
- ✓ Ensure all learners feel safe to learn and try new learning out.
- ✓ Do a full learning needs and resources assessment (LNRA) before and during your learning event.
- ✓ Ensure proper sequence of your learning tasks and the new content to be learned.
- ✓ Affirm all questions, answers and comments from learners (and co-facilitators).
- ✓ Offer choice to learners on what they do to learn new content and how they do it.
- ✓ Check-in with your learners regularly about pace, teaching method, the learning environment, etc.
- ✓ Debrief after new content is taught and after learners work in groups.
- ✓ Help all learners understand the relevance of new content and an entire learning event.
- ✓ Send information about a learning event and the new content ahead of time.
- ✓ Be flexible.
- ✓ Name when learners will use the new content; immediacy.
- ✓ Offer ways for all learning styles to learn new content.
- ✓ Design learning tasks in such a way that all learners are able to personalize learning.
- ✓ Show respect to all learners.
- ✓ Never enter an argument with a learner or try and force the learning of new content.
- ✓ Help learners name the resistance they are feeling, so they can better discuss and examine it.
- ✓ Invite learners to try out something new, reserve judgment in the learning event and make personal decisions at the end about the new content they learned.

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Meeting and Planning for Resistance

- A. Going back to your workplace with new knowledge, skills and attitudes can be difficult. Kurt Lewin talks about this and encourages us to be conscious of what it takes for positive change to happen. We also know resistance can and will be felt at different times in different places.



Take a few minutes on your own to **predict** where you will feel and see resistance. **Write** those on Post-it Notes.

We will share your ideas.

- B. Now, with a partner **brainstorm** things you can do to plan and meet this resistance. **Write** these on Post-it Notes.

We will hear your suggestions.

- C. **Write** 2 of these ideas that you want to work on in the near future. **Name** the situation, time and the action you plan on taking.

The event/place:
The time:
What I will do:
The event/place:
The time:
What I will do:



Tough Situations: How to overcome resistance

- A. We have all faced or can imagine tough situations for a facilitator and teacher. Let's document some of those situations, and how we might respond. We'll use the carousel method for this.

The following questions are on cards on the floor:

- What might cause resistance?
- How can we prevent resistance?
- How do we handle resistance when it happens?

Decide which station you'd like to visit first, and then with the others who you find there respond to the question. After a few minutes we'll rotate, just one time!

In the large group, we'll hear a sample of responses to each of the three questions.

- B. Remember these ideas from the Learning Needs and Resources Assessment article that was sent out earlier. Which of these strategies did we already mention? Which ones had we not yet mentioned, but might be helpful?

10 Ways to Minimize Resistance in a Learning Event

by Jeanette Romkema,
GLP Partner and Senior Trainer

Every trainer, teacher, professor, facilitator, keynote speaker and curriculum designer encounters resistance. Learners will sometimes resist content being taught, the way something is presented, the task being asked of them or any number of aspects of a course. Regardless of the type of resistance, one thing is important for us all to know: resistance is normal and should be expected. Once we accept this, we will stop trying to avoid or ignore it. We need to plan for resistance and meet it head-on when it comes. If we think we can escape it, we are mistaken. Unresolved resistance will affect the learning of the individual involved and, because of its potentially explosive nature it can pull down an entire group or course.



1. TRANSPARENCY.
2. SAFETY.
3. LEARNING NEEDS AND RESOURCE ASSESSMENT.
4. SEQUENCE.
5. AFFIRMATION.
6. CHOICE.
7. CHECK-IN.
8. DEBRIEF.
9. RELEVANCE.
10. WELCOME IT.

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Resistance Overcome by Courage

some thoughts by Jane Vella

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At the United Nations in New York in 1991, a number of leading physicians from around the world had been invited to a conference on designing AIDS training. The Indian physician, Dr. A., in charge of coordinating the conference, had hired me to design with a core team. The night before the conference was to start, a small group of doctors came to her complaining that the program they received did not follow usual conference protocols: learned speeches given from a podium by learned physicians and researchers. Dr. A. relented, and told me she planned to restructure the conference. She invited me to stay overnight and attend the first day.

I was saddened by her decision, although I understood the pressure she felt. At about ten that evening, the phone rang in my hotel room. It was Dr. A. "Please consider leading the conference according to our original plan," she said. "I realize that the dialogue approach is imperative here."

The next morning we began the conference with Dr. A. introducing the process and me as the leader. I set the first learning task to the group, who were somewhat reluctant to get started. One of the members of the core team (Dr. T.) who had been most outspoken in his opposition to a dialogue education format sat almost sullenly at his group's table. He was a well-dressed European physician, in an expensive suit and tie, highly shined shoes and a grim visage. I watched him as the group set to work on the first learning task, inviting inductive reflection on the scope of the problem in their unique context. After a few moments, his expensive jacket came off and was draped over the back of his chair. Then, I saw him open his shirt collar and loosen his tie. The dialogue was heating up! Soon Dr. T. was in the midst of it, and the fur was flying. Learning was going on apace, and there was not an expert at a lectern in sight. They were, of course, all experts, sharing not only their ideas but also their passion.

Across the room, I saw Dr. A. watching the learning groups; when I caught her eye she smiled and mouthed a silent 'Thank You'. She had trusted the design and it was bearing fruit in learning for all. I wish we had had at that time the tools for evaluation (cf. Chapter Nine) that we have now: how useful it would be to know what learning took place in that room and what transfer and impact followed the conference.

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Frame the learning task. When you are faithful to your design, you place it in a frame that enhances the learning potential of everyone in the room. The frame is the overall design, with content specified and objectives clearly set forth. The time frame is non-negotiable so the teacher is accountable to do all of the learning tasks in the overall design within that time frame. Learning is not arbitrary, dependent on the attentiveness or intelligence of the learner. The event is not a brilliant performance by a sagacious and learned teacher. It is a faithful design for learning.

Each learning task follows on the previous one in an explicit and clear sequence, so the frame itself is evident. As learners work each task, they naturally make reference to preceding learning tasks and new knowledge and skills already gained. The skilful Dialogue Educator celebrates each reference, thus reinforcing the continuous learning. The frame extends and opens to embrace contiguous interests of learners; but there is always a frame.

A Broken Frame. When I was in high school, I led my classmates in a seditious effort to break the frame in the classroom of a particular old nun who was given to philosophizing. One or the other of us was set to ask a broad, irrelevant question quite apart from the topic at hand. Once we had hooked the teacher by this question, we could sit back and be entertained by her musings and memories. I confess this at this late date to show how easy it is to break the frame, and get a leader to abandon his design.



The tools and resources in this issue of *DE Tips & Tools* were developed/compiled by [Jeanette Romkema](#), Certified Dialogue Education Teacher and GLP Partner. Jeanette will be teaching *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach* in Toronto, November 2-5, 2010, or [contact her](#) to bring Dialogue Education™ directly to your company or organization.