

Coaching Through Resistance

Possible Causes	How Coaches Can Help
1 People just lack the motivation to change. <i>High Resistance to Change</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exhaustion Overwhelmed Might no longer see themselves as people capable of climbing over the exhaustion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take goals and break them into smaller more manageable steps. Use positive social pressure (i.e. asking all teachers to share a strategy they tried at the next meeting). Have private conversations with those who still resist change even after your otherwise successful efforts to motivate people. Be a safe place where they can share their fears. Don't allow them to slow down the momentum of the school or let their resistance become an endpoint for school-wide growth. As a coach, maintain control and do not let go of the goal.
2 People don't believe there is a need for change. <i>High Resistance to Change</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is a problem of logic. Exacerbated by data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coach cannot break it down into logical persuasion. Use the data to strike an emotional chord. Show them how a problem might snowball and impact actual lives.
3 "We've never done that before." <i>High Resistance to Change</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People are prone to resisting steps they've never taken before. They have no proof it will work. It might be a waste of time. Common to see this where there is a high fear of failure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look for threads of the environment or past initiatives that relate to what you are sharing. Anchor the unfamiliar in the familiar. Try fitting the new into a pre-existing structure.
4 People were enthusiastic but then lost momentum. <i>Medium/High Resistance to Change</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disappointment in results to date can cause people to lose faith in themselves and/or their colleagues. Results of change efforts do not materialize as quickly as people expected or wanted. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remind teachers how far they have come up to this point. Enumerate and praise specific achievements where possible. Teach a growth mindset. Support momentum by reminding people that they are achieving objective and are getting closer to goals every day.
5 People are stuck in analysis paralysis. <i>Medium Resistance to Change</i>	
People are so inundated with data, they can't see a way out.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pick an exit point (no matter how small or unsure) then use emotion to convince people to take a leap and try a solution.

Possible Causes	How Coaches Can Help
6 “I’ll get to that change tomorrow.” <i>Medium Resistance to Change</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes, procrastination is at the root of resistance. • This is usually a symptom of being overwhelmed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shrink the problem down so it can’t overwhelm. • Put the big picture aside and ask teachers to think about one thing they can do this week. • If they still resist, ask, “What can you commit to try this week?” • Build in accountability. • Ask them to report back to you how it went. • The main point is to get people to do the task, not assess it.
7 People are certain “it will never work.” <i>Medium Resistance to Change</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Might no longer see themselves as people capable of climbing over the exhaustion • People have been inundated with initiatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show them it will work. • Prove them wrong, with patience and empathy. • Acknowledge concerns and fears, but don’t let them stay there. • Find examples of where “it” is working. • Find a classroom to visit where “it” is working. • Find ways to give voice to educators who are well developed in this area. • Look to other schools to visit or do video conference.
8 “We know we should be doing this, but we’re not.” <i>Medium Resistance to Change</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing isn’t enough. • Often stems from exhaustion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Break down plans into smaller, more manageable parts. • Collaboration and accountability can be very powerful here. • Suggest people work in pairs or teams to build in natural accountability.
9 Most people agree change is needed, but nothing is happening. <i>Medium Resistance to Change</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People cannot see the path forward due to lack of clarity. • People only see a roadblock. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make the end goal explicit and understood. • Vision Cast • Work from a series of smaller goals to light the path. • Look for roadblocks that could be standing in their way. • Discuss growth mindset. • Make sure you, as the coach, believe in your colleagues’ abilities.

*Based on the work from *Coaching Redefined: A Guide to Leading Meaningful Instructional Growth* by Sherry St. Clair and *Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard* by Chip Heath and Dan Heath.