

Coaching Through Resistance

| Possible Causes | How Coaches Can Help |
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| 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. • Reassure them you are a safe place where they can share their fears. • Don't allow them to slow 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"> • A problem of logic exists • Exacerbated by data | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach struggling to break it down the need for change logically and persuasively. • 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. • No proof it will work • Seen as 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 in 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 and 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. |

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| 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. • 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. • Look for schools where “it” is working and visit or do a video conference. • 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. • Refocus educator on growth mindset. • Make sure you, as the coach, believe in your colleagues’ abilities and express it to them. |

*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.