Perspectives on Resistance

Forms of Resistance (what it looks and sounds like)

- Silence, passive withdrawal
- Active objections
- Presentation of competing solutions
- Argument or over-analysis about details
- Reasonableness, justification, intellectualism
- Covert whispering campaigns/sabotage
- Distractions (irrelevant history, issues, arguments)
- Over-personalization of the issues
- Attack on leadership (process, motives)
- “Lawyer up”/compliance mode
- “Pretend” enthusiasm and agreement
- Microaggressions
- Excuses and complaints
- “We have no resources to do that”

Unproductive Responses to Resistance

- Give up
- Blame and attack back
- Cull the resistors from the herd
- Take it out on your allies
- Ignore what you can learn from it
- Ignore/minimize the impact on you

Some Causes of Resistance

- Protection of something considered valuable (e.g., resources, reputation, power, vulnerability)
- Lack of readiness (e.g., lack of information; under-skilled; discomfort and awkwardness; fear)
- Lack of resources (e.g., lack of time, energy, money, attention; competing priorities)
- Policies and norms (e.g., what’s accepted, expected, valued, and what’s not; ideas about who should be doing what)
- Ideological/principled disagreements
- Racism, sexism, intent to do harm
How Might Resistance Be Useful?

- Provides **information** about stakeholders
- Clarifies the **scope** of unresolved need
- Makes new **ideas** or solutions available
- Gives **feedback** about your ideas
- Gives feedback about your **communication**
- Reveals conflicts and other **barriers**
- Can be channeled into **collaborative** problem-solving and buy-in

Possible Responses to Resistance

*Consider the Education, Persuasion, Incentive, & Pressure (EPIP) model, developed by Mark Chesler and Diana Kardia, with these principles in mind:*

1. The best response is the one that is well-matched to the circumstances
2. An effective match occurs by first listening to and learning from the resistance
3. In general, each step of this model assumes the prior step has already been used and is insufficient

**Education (the power of information)**

- Explain the benefits, process, or resources associated with your perspective
- Assess where information or data is lacking, and provide it
- Identify and clarify hidden assumptions or fears

**Persuasion (the power of relationship & interaction)**

- Take them out for coffee
- Provide your personal motivation
- Speak up for others as an advocate and ally: give voice to the way this problem and solution affects a particular population (e.g., students, assist professors, the chair)
- Acknowledge the legitimacy of different perspectives, needs, and experiences and find common ground
- Engage in cooperative problem-solving

**Incentive (the power of resources & rewards)**

- Provide new or additional resources or opportunities
- Demonstrate how your solution will positively impact commonly held core values (i.e., “we can get better at what we’re all here to do!”)
- Link your solution to other important or popular goals (i.e., rising tide lifts all boats)
- Frame your solution as something that also addresses other important problems

**Pressure (the power of power)**

- Wait it out (time pressure)
- Ride over it with a mandate
- Bring in a higher authority