

The one thing that will derail your New Year's resolutions (and how to overcome it)



In January, most of us set some sort of resolution for what we hope to accomplish in the next twelve months. Resolutions are important, but more importantly, our intentions behind them speak volumes for who we dream of being. The difference between an intention and resolution is this: an intention reflects our deeper purpose in life, and our resolution is our decision to act upon it. The problem so many of us face when carrying out our resolutions is that we often lose the motivation or energy to stick with it, despite our intention. How is it that we can feel a deep desire and inner purpose to achieve some goal, and yet remain complacent in the status quo? I have written about the quality of [grit](#), which is important to cultivate because it alone can make a huge difference in reaching our goals. But another piece of the puzzle is termed “resistance”, which will be the focus of this post.

In his book [“The War of Art”](#), Steven Pressfield coins a term for that mysterious, invisible force that keeps us stuck where we are, especially when we pursue creative and self-improvement endeavors. He calls it “resistance”, and it can manifest as distraction, procrastination, anxiety or even as depression. Like gravity, resistance is a natural law. It represents the equal but opposite force in response to our efforts to elevate ourselves into higher levels of being. ***Said simply, resistance pulls us back when we try to push ourselves***

forward. It doesn't matter what the activity is that we are engaging in either, just as long as it is something meaningful to us. It might be walking a few blocks around the neighborhood each evening, or sitting down to finish the next great American novel. Anything that we pursue in attempts to develop ourselves further than we currently are will be met with resistance. The more strongly you feel about pursuing a goal, the more you will feel resistance pulling you in the other direction.

Resistance's purpose is to prevent you from changing. It comes from the ego, and is threatened by those things that connect you to your higher Self and calling. That is why the more you try to pursue those specific goals in the area of your gift and calling in the world, the stronger resistance will tug at you. It might seem unfair, but look at it this way: When you feel resistance, you know you are on the right track. When you start to recognize that it is becoming harder to push yourself towards your health goals or creative projects, you know without a doubt that you are on the brink of transformation. Resistance is your guide, and you will feel it more intensely the closer you get to the finish line.

Overcoming resistance is a matter of taking a strict approach with it. It requires setting a schedule, and sticking to it (there's grit again). Pressfield writes that it's about seeing yourself as a professional in whatever activity you are engaged in. You might pursue the activity out of love, but if it is important to you, then you must look at it like you would any other job. You show up, get the work done, and go home. It's not a matter of doing it when you have time, or when you feel like it. It's knowing that if you don't do it, you aren't living the life you truly want. You aren't *living*. Ultimately, it's a matter of life or death in the spiritual sense.

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Be careful, because often resistance masks itself in perfectionism. You might feel that unless you do something perfectly, it isn't worth doing at all. But this is what resistance wants you to believe. It knows that when you are tired, or having a bad day, that you'll throw in the towel because you don't feel like any effort you put forth is good enough. But it's not about doing anything perfectly. Maybe you write a page of your book that you just end up throwing out. The goal isn't to complete each task as you imagined you will on your absolute best day, but merely to look resistance straight in the face and get the work done anyway, even on your worst day.

Steven Pressfield doesn't measure the day's success by the work he accomplished. He measures it by the answer to this one question: *How well did I overcome resistance?* I've started posing this question to myself at the close of each day. The answer comes to me immediately and intuitively, and I find that keeping the concept of resistance in mind helps me stick to my creative and self-improvement endeavors the following day. If you want 2014 to be year of exponential growth, of achieving the goals you set forth in your New Year's resolutions, become acquainted with resistance and how it shows up in your own life.

No matter what resolutions you have set for this year, the prerequisite to every one will be overcoming resistance. The way gravity pulls your foot back to the earth after each step, resistance wants to keep you standing still. Don't let it.

