

The Power of Resistance in Your Career and Life

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

Every single day in business and in our personal and family lives, most of us face difficult choices. One of the hardest things to do in life is to resist pursuits of immediate gratification. However, the more we resist immediate gratification, the more success, happiness, and long-term fulfillment we generally end up experiencing.

The power of resistance is something that can transform your life. Very few people realize the power of resistance--how it can make a major difference in their lives and the lives of those around them. Resistance is a sign of leadership and a sign of strength.

When I was in high school, I was attending school in Bangkok, Thailand, and I was on the student council at the time. For reasons I still do not understand to this day, the school had hired a well-known leadership coach to come and teach leadership skills to everyone who was on the student council. The leadership coach had been brought over from the United States, and some of our class time had previously involved watching videos of this leadership coach lecturing people, in stadiums, about leadership matters. Since this happened more than 25 years ago, I must confess I do not remember the name of the leadership coach, but it was a really exceptional class and I was privileged to take it for three or so days with only around 20 other kids.

The main lesson I got out of the class was that leadership is about *resisting* doing what most others will do.

- The leader will resist walking by a piece of trash in public, or in school, without picking it up.
- The leader will resist talking negatively about others.
- The leader will resist getting drunk with the other kids when everyone goes out.
- The leader will resist not making a good effort with his or her studies.
- The leader will resist being a bully or going along with the bully.
- The leader will resist bragging about himself or herself.
- The leader will resist skipping class or sports practice.
- The leader will resist falling asleep in class.
- The leader will resist making jokes in class that upset the teacher.
- The leader will resist being selfish and cutting in line at lunch.

This leadership class was in many ways transformational for me because after taking it I realized just how powerful the force of resistance is. In fact, the more you master the power of resistance, the better you will do in your career and life. Resistance is, in a word, one of the greatest secrets to fulfillment and success.

There are a lot of things, situations, and behaviors you can resist, which will make you stronger. I have shared some of the more important ones below.

1. Resist Talking Negatively About Others.

One of the hardest things to resist, for many people, is talking negatively about others. When we are speaking with others, a topic of conversation that often comes up is someone's negative opinions about another person. When we speak negatively about others, this often makes us feel better about ourselves for a short time. When we hear about someone's problems or shortcomings, it also can make us feel better about our own situation for some time.

I hear people talk negatively about others on a daily basis and I think this is one of the most important things to resist. One of the most important reasons to avoid talking negatively about others is that if you do talk negatively about somebody, it may get back to that person. There is no faster way to lose a job or make a permanent enemy than having the person you spoke negatively about find out that you have been speaking about him or her behind the person's back. This will always harm you, and it rarely can help in any way.

I lost a job this way at one time. I was working as a valet parking attendant. The only income I made was from tips. I remember that I worked from morning until evening on the Fourth of July one year; I ran myself so hard that day that I almost passed out. I remember it was very hot outside.

At the end of the day my boss came up to me and said "give me all your tips." I took all of the money out of my pockets and gave it to him. I had made hundreds of dollars in tips that day and the boss could see that my pockets were bulging with money.

In all fairness, asking for a portion of my tips was something that the man had told me he might do when he hired me. He said that on certain days he would take all the tips but on most days I could keep them. Nevertheless, I was very upset about the policy on this particular day, since I had worked especially hard and earned a lot of tips.

The next day I mentioned to one of my coworkers that I thought it was pretty sleazy that my boss had done this. My coworker had brought up the issue to see how I felt about it. I should have resisted saying anything; after all, while it was probably illegal for my boss to make me work for 12 straight hours without paying me anything, he had made this deal with me when I started, and I had taken the job on those terms.

My coworker sympathized with me and told me how much of a sleazeball she also thought he was. Funny enough, as it turns out, she went right to the guy that night and told him I thought he was a sleazeball. He fired me the second he learned about this. The only positive thing I did in this situation was *resist* the urge I had at the time to tell my boss what the girl herself had said about him, or about the fact that she had brought the entire thing up, as a platform to share with me her own

negative opinions. Nonetheless, I had made a mistake and there was no sense in dragging her into it.

Not only can talking negatively about others lose you your job, it can cost you your friends. When it gets back to a friend that you have said something negative about him or her, it can ruin the relationship forever. I have seen entire branches of families stop communicating with one another as a result of this behavior. It is extremely dangerous to talk negatively about others.

In addition, if you talk negatively about others while they are not around, the people you are talking to will also quickly realize that you are likely to talk negatively about them when they are not around. Then they will not trust you as much or think as positively of you.

Everyone will think more highly of you if you resist talking negatively about others when they are not around. Just resist it. While you will not feel the momentary sense of satisfaction that comes from talking negatively about others, you will be much better off in the long run when you resist this behavior.

2. Resist Taking Credit for Things.

Resist the need to take credit for things that you have done. When you take credit, all the time you are attracting attention to yourself as being the smart one or the one who deserves to be the center of attention. When you take credit for yourself, you do not allow others to feel their own contribution as strongly. Moreover, taking credit for an end result can potentially make others resent you a great deal.

In my career as someone who finds people jobs, I have helped numerous people get incredible jobs that I know they would never have gotten without me. In many cases I did this by contacting someone I know or just by good marketing. Some of the people I have gotten jobs like this have been people I have been close to.

The biggest mistake I have made, though, is trying too hard or too often to take credit for getting them their jobs. This is the stupidest thing I could have done. How do you think this made the people who got their [new jobs](#) feel? It made them feel like they owed me something, and as if their contributions and talents alone were not what got them the job (which in truth *really* were what got them the job). This alienated these people towards me, making them feel lesser than me; in short they resented me.

Regardless of what you accomplish, you should try to resist taking credit for different things. The world, the karmic forces out there, and most people are generally pretty aware of the contributions you have made. You do not need to take credit for things. When you take credit for things, you direct others' attention to you for one moment and then they move their attention elsewhere. When you do not take credit, there is an invisible current of positive energy beneath the surface, which is directed toward you because people understand and realize what you contribute.

3. Resist Your Own Negative Beliefs About What You Can Accomplish.

We also need to resist our beliefs that it is not possible to fulfill many of our own goals or to accomplish whatever we are trying to achieve. We need to resist the voice inside of us that tells us we cannot do something. If you do this, you can then concentrate on actually fulfilling your goals. Let go of the thinking that is limiting you in terms of what you are capable of.

Self-improvement and the pursuit of bettering ourselves has a great deal to do with empowering our thinking, our minds, and our thought processes. Every time you tell yourself you cannot accomplish something, you limit yourself--because what you believe is generally what you will achieve. The most important person you communicate with is yourself. So please resist the urge you may have to tell yourself you cannot achieve something. In truth, you can accomplish whatever you set your mind to. The secret to this achievement is not limiting yourself. Far too many people sit on the sidelines of life without accomplishing and doing everything they are capable of because they tell themselves they cannot do it.

4. Resist the Need to Talk About Yourself.

Another important thing to resist is the need to talk about ourselves and gratify our own egos. Typically when we are around people and they are speaking about something we know a great deal about, we are eager to speak up about what we know about the matter. This is especially so when we know more than the people talking about a given matter. This is something that I often encounter when people are talking about career matters, for example.

To most people, the most interesting and important person in the world is themselves. However, when you allow others to be the center of attention and to talk about themselves, they typically feel much better in your presence. People are much happier around you, and this happiness wears off on you. Allow people to talk about themselves.

I remember once being out on a [business meeting](#), and the guy I was with could not stop talking about himself. He must have talked for literally two hours straight without a break. I had gone out to sushi with him and his girlfriend and the guy talked the entire time. It gave me a headache, and in the finale of the evening I became so disoriented and frustrated by all of his talking about himself that I crashed my truck into another car. Resist the need to talk about yourself all the time--it can become extremely annoying.

5. Resist Laziness.

One of the most crucial things to resist is laziness. Many people spend day after day starting something and never finishing it. You need to resist laziness and do everything within your power to complete your goals, especially whenever you think about stopping something that you started. Pushing through is incredibly important.

You need to resist the urge to not do things the correct way. You need to resist the urge to cut corners. You need to resist the urge to not be focused. The urge to be lazy is something that surrounds us and tempts us at all times.

- Walking by the trash in the kitchen without taking it outside is an example of laziness.
- Not putting a dish away is an example of laziness.
- Not making a call at the end of the day, which you promised you would make, is an example of laziness.
- Sleeping in and missing work is an example of laziness.
- Not double-checking your work is an example of laziness.
- Not following through with an exercise routine is an example of laziness.
- Not following through on your diet is an example of laziness.
- Not doing anything you said you would do is an example of laziness.

Being lazy will not serve you well, and it is almost a universal law that the people who get ahead the most are not lazy. The

best people in any profession are typically those who are not lazy. They are careful to resist the urge to cut corners, and they always will do everything in their power to do the right thing. Follow through and avoid being lazy.

6. Resist Being Selfish

We also need to learn to resist being selfish. When we are focused on what we want rather than on what we can do for other people, we put our energy in the wrong place. When we can resist the need to focus on ourselves and, instead, put our energy into helping and benefiting others, we benefit the world more strongly.

Life is more fulfilling when we concentrate on what we can give to others instead of just *what is in it for us*. Most people are trying to seek fulfillment in life just for the sake of what they personally want. A great deal of power is derived from giving of ourselves and not being selfish.

When you are around selfish people, every action they take is based on what they can get at the moment and what they can take from life, and from you. True fulfillment involves giving of ourselves and sharing with others. The more selfish we are, the more what we are seeking continually moves away from us.

7. Resist Feeling Regret.

Almost all of us are doing things from time to time that we regret. We may regret something we have said. We may regret something we have done. We may regret a choice we failed to make. One of the most powerful things that we can do is resist feeling guilty about various things in our lives. This guilt will eat away at us and do us a great deal of harm if we continue to let it be part of our lives. You should not ignore that you have done something that you regret, but you should do whatever you can to let this go and move forward with your life.

Many people go through life regretting this or that. This self-loathing does them no good. You may have said or done something that you regret; however, the sooner you move on in your life, the better you will be. You need to resist the regret. The regret will tear you up. Focusing on past mistakes clouds our ability to see the present clearly. Life is about moving forward, and the more you resist feeling regret, the more easily you can make progress in your life.

8. Resist Judgment.

Most of us spend a great deal of our existence judging those around us. When you judge others, you are almost certain to find that they will judge you in return. This is a rock-solid idea, something that I have seen play itself out over and over again. Judging others is simply never a good idea, and it can continually cause problems and issues in our lives. Nobody likes being judged. Most of our anger and resentment of others in the world is directed toward those who have judged us in the past. When you resist judging others, you too cannot be judged.

Judgment is not confined to talking negatively about others--rather, it involves how we think about the world. When we think about the world in terms of who is wrong and who is right, we are engaging in judgment. It is important to resist this line of thinking. A mind that is preoccupied with judgment focuses all your energy on what you *do not like*, instead of focusing your energy on what is positive, and helping propel you forward.

9. Resist Expectations.

Many people have incredibly high or unreasonable expectations for themselves and other people. These expectations are for things that often fail to occur. For example:

- You expect that someone will call you but you do not hear from him or her.
- You expect to get a certain job but you do not.
- You expect that you will get a raise and do not get the raise.
- You expect to be invited to a party but you are not.
- You expect someone will thank you for something you have done....
- You expect someone to call you on your birthday....

When we expect something and do not get it, this can gnaw and grind on us like crazy. The more we allow this to gnaw and grind on us, the more it will hurt us. We need to resist this pattern of behavior. The more expectations you have, the more you are going to find yourself disappointed in the future. It is good to want things to be a certain way, but when you expect and demand this, it can be harmful to you. Many people go through life upset that their expectations are not being met and are continually frustrated. Don't be one of these people.

10. Resist the Need to Control.

You cannot control everything around you. People will do what they want. People will cheat you. The world will change. People will change.

One of the biggest illusions is that we can control everything around us. We cannot. The more you try to control the world around you, the more you are setting yourself up for disappointment. You need to resist your need to control people and circumstances around you.

Resistance is one of the most powerful forces you can use in your life and some of the best career advice I can give. The harder you work at resisting, the stronger and more successful you will become. The more you embrace resistance and learn to use it in your life, the more fulfilling your life and career will be.

THE LESSON

Develop the art of resisting those things that give you instant gratification. While attractive, these things are usually short-lived and ultimately lead to failure and disappointment. You must develop tremendous strength and willpower to resist these things; this resistance capability distinguishes true leaders.