

OCTOBER 2009

# Use Resistance to Create Change

With NLP

“think  
learn?  
succeed”

“Smart training for clever people”

Hypnotist Milton Erickson said “There are no resistant clients. Just inflexible hypnotists”. By working with resistance, he was able to change many ‘unchangeable’ clients.

Milton often told a story about his childhood to illustrate this principle. He grew up on a farm. One day he was watching his father try to pull a heifer into the barn. The heifer was putting up a great fight, pulling against the rope Milton’s father had tied around her neck. As he struggled with the animal, Erickson Senior lost his footing. He fell over and landed in a pile of manure.

Milton burst out laughing. This enraged his father, who shouted “If you’re so clever, why don’t you get her into the barn?” Milton took up the challenge. He walked behind the heifer and pulled her tail. She reacted by running forward – straight into the barn. This is what Milton meant by ‘utilising resistance’. By working with others’ motivation he became a powerful change agent.

Here’s how YOU can use others’ resistance to create change:

## 1. Acknowledge benefits in the current behaviour

Resistance is a sign that there are *benefits* in the old behaviour. For example, many smokers find their habit triggers a relaxed state. This is one benefit of smoking.

## 2. Suggest new ways to achieve the same benefits

If someone feels they’re losing something, they won’t change. Help them keep the old benefit AND change their behaviour. **Example** the smoker will find it easier to quit by learning new ways to relax.

## 3. Give them a choice

Resistance can be a reaction to perceived loss of control. By giving the other person a choice, you’ll help them feel in control. **Example** Erickson might have said “I don’t know whether you’ll choose to quit smoking today or next week...” He thus created an illusion of choice, while at the same time embedding the command “quit smoking”.

## Learn more about it

Change management is an art. You can master it in our workshop *Meet the Change Challenge and Win*. Hear how to inspire people to support change. See why some people resist - and others embrace - change. Then master powerful tools for getting a change plan right, creating team buy-in, handling negative attitudes and making sure your change sticks over time.

**Book an NLP course for your team.**

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