



Why We Resist Change and Why Resistance Is Perfectly Human

The Anne McDowell Perspective™
Issue 1



One of the most common misconceptions about change is that resistance is something to overcome.

It is often treated as a barrier to progress, an attitude to be corrected or evidence that people are unwilling to move forward. Leaders become frustrated by it, organisations try to manage it, and individuals often judge themselves for experiencing it.

I see resistance differently.

After almost three decades of working with individuals, leaders and organisations navigating change, I have come to believe that resistance is rarely the problem. More often, it is valuable information.

When people encounter significant change, they are not responding only to the event itself. They are responding to what it represents.



It may represent uncertainty about the future, concern about their competence, the loss of relationships they value or anxiety about whether they will still belong in an environment that suddenly feels unfamiliar.

Sometimes resistance reflects previous experiences in which change was poorly handled. Sometimes it is the natural response to leaving what is known before there is confidence in what comes next.

When we understand resistance in this way, it stops looking like opposition and begins to look like communication.

Instead of asking,

How do we reduce resistance? a more useful question becomes,

What is this resistance helping us understand?

That shift changes the quality of the conversation.



Rather than pushing harder, we become more curious. Rather than assuming people lack commitment, we begin exploring what they need to make sense of the change and respond to it thoughtfully.

Often, people are not seeking persuasion. They are seeking clarity, understanding and enough perspective to determine how they will move forward.

The same principle applies in our personal lives.

When we resist a decision, delay an important conversation or hesitate before taking the next step, it does not necessarily mean we are incapable of change.

It may mean there is something we have not yet acknowledged.

We may need more information. We may need time to understand what we are leaving behind.



We may need to examine the assumptions shaping our response or reconnect with capabilities that uncertainty has temporarily obscured.

Resistance does not need to determine our future. It does not mean we should avoid difficult decisions or remain indefinitely within what is familiar.

It simply deserves to be understood before it is dismissed.

Some of the most productive conversations about change begin when we stop judging resistance and start listening to it.

That is often where perspective develops. It is where people begin to understand what matters, recognise what they fear and identify what they need to lead themselves forward.

Resistance is not the enemy of change.

It is the beginning of understanding it.



Anne McDowell

The Anne McDowell Perspective™
Navigating Change

www.annemcdowell.com