



Resistance and Procrastination

Resistance and the Fear of Being Controlled

By Dr. Margaret Paul

Is it more important to you to not be controlled than it is to love yourself and others? Do you find yourself resisting, even when it's something you want to do? In this article, learn how to heal the trap of resistance.

Roger, 33, is a successful engineer. Married with one child, Roger called me because his marriage was falling apart. His wife, Laura, had recently told him that the marriage was over unless they got some help. She told him she just couldn't take it any more.

Roger and Laura were both on the phone for their first phone session with me. Laura described what the problem was for her.

"Roger is never present - not with me, not with our daughter. He just does his own thing and doesn't consider what anyone else might need. If I get upset or irritated, he completely retreats and waits for me to fix it. He can retreat for days at a time and the energy around the house is awful. I try to take care of myself, but I just can't be around his negativity.

"On top of that, if I ask him to do something, he either refuses to do it, or says he will do it and then doesn't, or ends up messing it up. I know he is competent because of the work he does, but he sure doesn't act competent at home. The only time he is really interested in me is when I've completely pulled back. If I want anything from him, he retreats. I can't live like this anymore!"

"Roger," I said, "Do you know what Laura is talking about?"

"I know what she is talking about, but I don't see it the way she does. I just feel like she always wants something from me. I end up feeling criticized and trapped a lot. I shut down to get away from feeling trapped."

"Do you still feel this way, now that she wants out of the marriage?"

"It's funny that you should ask that. No. As soon as she said she wanted out, all of my feelings for her came back. I can't figure it out!"

"Roger, was one or both of your parents controlling with you?"

"Yes, my mother. She was incredibly controlling."

"And did you learn various ways of resisting her?"

"Yes!" Roger laughs. He obviously gets pleasure out of being resistant.

Roger has a deep fear of engulfment. As soon as someone wants something from him, his terror of losing himself is activated and he automatically resists. He does not even stop to ask himself if he wants to do whatever it is the other person wants. He does not stop to think about what he wants or what is in his highest good. He just resists. He resists because not being controlled is more important to him than anything. Not being controlled is more important to Roger than being loving to himself or to others. Not being controlled is his God.

While Laura can certainly be controlling at times - as we all can - she does not cause Roger's resistance. His choice to resist rather than care about himself and others started as a small child, and has continued into adulthood. As long as not being controlled is more important to Roger than being loving, there is nothing Laura can do.

The real issue is that Roger has never developed a loving adult part of himself capable of thinking about what is best for him. He is operating from a small child aspect of himself who automatically resists in the face of Laura's requests, just as he did with his mother. Until Roger is willing to do the Inner Bonding work necessary to develop a loving adult self, he will continue to respond on automatic pilot, and Laura will continue to feel unloved by him.

The irony of the situation is that Roger is being controlled by his resistance. He is not deciding for himself what he wants and doesn't want - he is just automatically resisting. He is not even conscious that he is choosing to resist.

Because Roger did not want to lose Laura, he was willing to learn and practice Inner Bonding. The first step was to become aware of his resistance.

"Roger, I suggest that you consciously choose to resist rather than just doing it automatically. By choosing it, you will become aware of it. Are you willing to try this, or do you want to resist this too?"

Roger laughed. He could already feel his desire to resist doing what I asked him to do. But he did choose to try it.

Within a few months of practicing Inner Bonding, Roger was very aware of choosing to resist. He was also aware that it was no longer much fun. It was not making him happy. Roger decided that it was more important for him to be loving than to resist being controlled. He was on the road to healing.

Getting Unstuck from Procrastination

By Dr. Margaret Paul

Do you tell yourself that you will do the things you need to do, and then find yourself procrastinating? Find out what to do about this.

Sherry was behind on many important things in her life. She had unpaid traffic tickets, the insurance on her car had lapsed, she had a stack of unpaid bills, and her apartment was a mess. Sherry was not happy with this situation, yet seemed unable to do anything about it. Even when she set aside the time to get these things done, something always got in the way.

Sherry consulted with me because things had finally reached a point where her life was actually breaking down from her procrastination. She had had a minor car accident that she had to pay for, due to her unpaid insurance, and her phone had recently been shut off due to her unpaid bills. She was angry and frustrated with herself, yet found herself doing the bare minimum - just enough to get by. What was keeping her so stuck?

As we explored Sherry's deeper intention, she discovered that, as much as she wanted to get things done, there was something she wanted even more: to not be controlled. Not being controlled had become Sherry's focus early in her life as a way to protect against being consumed by her very controlling father. She would do anything to not be controlled by him, even to her own detriment.

The problem was that it was no longer her father whom she was resisting. She was now in resistance to her own inner controlling parent, the part of her that was just like her father. As soon as this

authoritarian part of her tried to get stuff done by saying things like, "Okay, it's time to get this apartment cleaned up. I can't live in a dump like this any longer", an unconscious, and very resistant part of her would take over with behavior that clearly said, "You can't make me. I can do whatever I want. You're not the boss of me." This resistant child in her had learned to respond in this way when she was very small, so now this behavior was unconscious and automatic.

Sherry was stuck in an unconscious power struggle between two wounded parts of herself - the part that wanted control and the part that didn't want to be controlled. The moment she told herself she had to do something, she would immediately go into resistance to doing it.

How could Sherry find her way out of this stuck place?

Before she could change it, she needed to become aware of it, rather than continue to operate on automatic pilot. We can't change something that we don't know we are doing. Sherry needed to become aware of both inner voices - the adolescent bossy, controlling voice of her father, and the younger voice of her resistant child. She needed to CHOOSE to be controlling and resistant - rather than doing it unconsciously - before she could have other choices available to her.

"But why would I choose this?" she asked.

"Good question! Yet this is what you are choosing every day. Until you are aware of choosing this, you can't choose anything else. How can you change it if you are doing it unconsciously? Just keep doing what you are doing, but now do it consciously. Watch yourself making this choice."

Sherry agreed to try this for a week. She was ecstatic at our next session. "I actually got the apartment cleaned!"

"That's great! Now I want you to start to become aware of what you want to do, and what is really in your highest good, rather than what you think you have to do. The challenge here is for you to develop a loving Adult part of you that is neither controlling nor resistant, but concerned with taking loving action that supports your highest good. This will take time and practice with Inner Bonding, but when you are thinking of what is really loving to yourself, rather than controlling and resisting being controlled, you will be unstuck in all areas of your life."

Sherry did practice Inner Bonding and found that the more she thought about what was in her highest good and took loving action for herself, the easier it became to get things done.

In the course of our work together, Sherry learned to develop a connection with a personal source of spiritual guidance to help her understand what was in her highest good and to follow through with the loving action. She found that the more she stayed connected with her spiritual guidance, the more powerful she felt within. When the controlling and resistant parts of her were no longer in charge of her choices, procrastination became a thing of the past.

Procrastination: Doing the Hard Stuff

By Dr. Margaret Paul

Do you find yourself procrastinating when you have hard or boring stuff to do? Do you then judge yourself for procrastinating? There is a way out of this!

What do you do when you have stuff to do that in your mind is really hard to do - like studying for an exam; writing a thesis, book, term paper or grant; preparing a presentation or a proposal; doing your taxes; sending in a resume; getting rid of clutter, and so on. How often do you put it off, procrastinating because it seems too hard?

Once you procrastinate, then what do you do? Do you judge yourself for not getting it done, beating yourself up in the hopes of getting yourself motivated? What happens then?

The wounded self often believes that self-judgment will get you to do what you have to do. But how often does this backfire? You might feel so bad from the self-judgment that you are afraid to even start to do the hard stuff, fearing that you will not be able to do it, that you are not adequate to the task. You might find yourself immobilized, distracting yourself with something like TV, rather than doing what you need to do, until you are really under the gun. Then the anxiety of not getting it done takes over again, and you finally do what you need to do - but all of this has taken a huge toll and you are exhausted. Not great for your health.

I want to encourage you to try a different approach next time you have hard stuff to do, or anytime you find yourself procrastinating. Instead of judging yourself, see if you can bring in compassion for the part of you that doesn't want to do the hard stuff. See if you can acknowledge that what you have to do is hard - that even though you may really want to do it, you may be anxious about being able to do it. Or, you may not want to do it, but know that you have to. What happens to your willingness to do the hard stuff, once you are being kind to yourself?

As you open to your compassion and an intent to learn, you might discover that you are not really worried about being able to do it, but rather that doing this kind of hard stuff makes you feel alone and lonely. If this is the case, acknowledge it, rather than judging yourself for it. Some of my clients who have hard work to do, such as writing a book or planning for a lecture, find that they do better if they ask someone to sit with them; some find it helpful to go to a WiFi café, rather than try to do it alone.

The wounded self will always want to put things off, saying things like:

"I have enough time. I'll get it done later."

"This is too hard. I don't think I can do this."

"I really don't want to do this. It's so boring. Maybe it will magically go away."

"I'm going to feel too lonely doing this. I'll just watch TV and have some ice cream and then maybe I'll feel better."

When you are operating as a loving Adult, you can address these wounded statements with compassion, as well as bring in the truth: that it is hard or boring, that it might feel lonely, but that you are capable of doing it, that it won't magically go away, that you don't want to be under the gun - with all the anxiety that goes with that - and that you will likely feel really great once it is finished.

When you have a loving Adult present, you might find numerous ways of getting the work done without the agony of procrastination.

Even if you continue to procrastinate, showing up as a compassionate loving Adult will always feel better than self-judgment, and will eventually lead to loving action.