

UNDERSTANDING WORKPLACE RESISTANCE

Resistance is a natural response to fear of the unknown, but with the right approach, leaders can transform hesitation into **engagement and progress**.¹

PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIERS^{2,3}

Defend. Employees may feel that changes threaten their position or the familiar way of doing things. This "status threat" can lead to justifications for maintaining existing structures.

- **Reduce barrier by framing changes as beneficial to everyone and emphasizing how they align with long-term success**



Deny. Employees may deny that workplace challenges exist or dismiss the need for adjustments. This can stem from "merit threat," fearing that recognizing disparities undermines their achievements.

- **Reduce barrier by encouraging reflection on values and contributions, while fostering open discussions and growth opportunities**



Distance. Employees may acknowledge that challenges exist but hesitate to engage personally, believing they are not part of the problem or solution.

- **Reduce barrier by framing initiatives as opportunities to reinforce shared values of fairness and collaboration, highlighting how engagement benefits the entire organization.**



Resistance can often signal the beginning of progress and change. Though it seems like we're on the edge of disaster, transformation is often just around the corner.⁴

References

1. <https://hbr.org/2012/09/ten-reasons-people-resist-change>
2. <https://hbr.org/2023/03/to-overcome-resistance-to-dei-understand-whats-driving-it>
3. https://osf.io/preprints/psyarxiv/6d4qc_v1
4. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/janicegassam/2023/07/13/the-history-of-dei-resistance-in-america/>