

PEOPLE DON'T RESIST CHANGE

By Morty Lefkoe

Do you think people resist change? ... Most people answer with an emphatic: "Yes," I don't think people resist change at all.

To which you might respond: "Well, if people don't resist change, why do most people not change when given reason to change?"

Good question.

Here's my answer: Imagine that you had been doing something a certain way for a long time and you believed that you were doing it the right way.

Now imagine that I come along and tell you not to do that way any more. I give you a lot of reasons and I promise a lot of benefits if you stop doing it your way and start doing it my way.

No matter how persuasive I might be, you and most other people probably wouldn't change their behavior. "Okay," you reply, "that just proves that people resist change."

Not necessarily. Think about what I just said.

If you think what you are doing is right and I am telling you to do something else, what does it sound like I am asking you to do? ... It would seem to you that I was telling you to do something wrong.

Think about that.

We don't resist doing something new or different—in other words, we don't resist change.

We resist doing what we think is wrong. When you really get this distinction, you will understand something about human behavior that most professionals in the training business still don't understand.

This is a different way of looking at something I've written about before.



Information and motivation do not change behavior because behavior is driven by beliefs. If you want to change behavior, change the beliefs that drive any given behavior—such as procrastination, yelling, etc.—and the behavior will change.

Many managers are reluctant to give their hourly employees the freedom to make decisions on their own, despite overwhelming evidence that some of the best ideas in many companies come from the hourly employees. If such managers believe they know what needs to be done and the people they manage do not, then how they manage is right.

Asking their employees to think for themselves is wrong. Change the belief and you change how a manager manages.

If people were generally resistant to change, then there would be little if anything we could do about it.



But if people don't change because they believe what they are doing is right and what you (or others) want is wrong, then we are now in a position to produce change in individuals and in the world by helping people realize that their beliefs are not "the truth."

(Can you see that all political arguments are nothing more than conflicting beliefs? Consider: Global warming. How to deal with the economy. The failure in the educational system. Health care.)

How do you know someone's belief isn't "the truth"?

Because all beliefs are only "a truths," the meaning we give to meaningless events.

What appears to be widespread resistance to change is nothing more than people acting consistently with their beliefs.

When people change their beliefs, change occurs naturally and effortlessly.

