



*Section One, Lesson Five:
Resistance and
“I’m the Exception”*

Table of Contents

Understanding Resistance

Plato's Cave: Compassion for the Resistance

Lessons from the Mat

"I'm the Exception" and Other Lines from Ego-Mind

Understanding Resistance

When we're invited to change — when we're standing on the threshold from living one's life with fear in the driver's seat to transforming into living an empowered life where the true Self is in charge — resistance almost always makes an appearance. Changing which part of us is running the show is no small change, and it's not one that occurs within the span of a week, a month, or even a year. No, it's the work of a lifetime. And while we may experience a free ride during certain stages of the transition between living life from our fear-based self to being able to *respond* to the fear and live from our essence — times when grace whispers us along like floating downstream on gentle currents — at other times we experience profound resistance to shifting out of the negative voices or false beliefs that dominate our lives.

Resistance is probably the most powerful force you will be working against as you embark on this work. My guess is that you have had to overcome some resistance just to purchase the course because there was probably a part of you that was scared that if you bought it, worked through it, and still felt anxious, that meant that you're not actually struggling with relationship anxiety but that you're in the wrong relationship. Even with this small example, you can begin to see how the fear-based self throws up roadblocks at every turn.

Even though you pushed through that initial resistance, as you work through this course you will likely encounter times when you feel split between two opposing forces: one part of you longs for healing and the accompanying sense of joy and fulfillment and the other part finds compelling reasons at every turn why healing and joy aren't possible, why this work doesn't actually apply to you.

Many people who struggle with resistance learn that they carry an arsenal of false beliefs stacked up like a brick barricade that prevents them from moving forward in their healing process. In these cases, it's essential to examine the false belief contained in each brick and slowly, repetitively, replace it with the truth.

These are the three most common reasons why resistance takes hold around relationship anxiety:

1. If I do this work I'll get so healed and happy that I'll leave my partner. I'll outgrow him/her and realize that I'm with my partner because I'm scared to be alone. Once I feel whole inside, I won't need my partner anymore and I'll leave.
2. If I take full responsibility for my healing, nobody else will do it for me. I'm waiting for someone (my parents, a therapist, a healer, a psychic) to give me the answers, to rescue me, to lift me from my pain, to tell me what to do, to make this decision for me. By abdicating responsibility, I'm avoiding really growing up.
3. I'm the exception. This work really doesn't apply to me. I'm different because... I'm the worst-case scenario because... (see last article in this packet).

So let's stop here for a moment. I want you to open your journal or a blank document on your computer and write down all of your beliefs that may be contributing to your resistance. If the three primary reasons I've listed above resonate for you, write about those. Once the false belief is brought to consciousness, the work is then being willing to recognize its falsity (the more you find your wholeness and joy, the more love you will have to share with your

loving partner; no one can or will rescue you from your own mind), and continually bring the light of truth to the belief until, over time, the brick is dissolved.

Plato's Cave: Compassion for the Resistance

A few months ago, a member of the Conscious Weddings E-Course sent me an email containing a re-telling of the allegory of Plato's Cave. She suggested that the parable could be understood as a representation of our challenge to break through the illusions about love and marriage that our culture propagates. She was absolutely right, and I took it a few steps further to include the transition of healing and the resistance that arises when the ego senses that its days are numbered as driver of your life. What strikes me most is that this was written over 2000 years ago, which means that resistance is deeply embedded into our codes of psyches. In other words, it's natural to hold on to our habitual and comfortable ways of seeing, believing, and behaving. It's natural to grip for dear life to that which we know and understand. It's natural for the ego to hold tight to its familiar ways. No one wants to die, even — or especially — the fear-based parts of ourselves.

When we view our transitions and resistances through this lens, we can bring compassion to this challenging process. Instead of berating ourselves with statements like, "I should make a different choice. I know what I have to do and now I have to do it. What's wrong with me for being stuck?" we can say, "It's scary to change. People have struggled with this transition for thousands of years. I'm sure that when I'm ready, I'll climb out of the cave and commit to a different path for my life. But for now I'm going to practice bringing compassion to myself instead of judgement."

Note: The italicized lines in the following are from my e-course member, and the subsequent lines are mine.

Fictional dialogue between Socrates (Plato's teacher) and Glaucon (Plato's brother)

Plato sets a scene in which there is a group of people deep within a dark cave. The people are bound by their hands, legs, and necks and have been in the cave since childhood. They have seen nothing else their entire lives but what is in the cave. They are unable to stand or move their heads. There is a fire burning slightly further away from the prisoners and slightly beyond that, there is a path with people carrying all sorts of artifacts — statues of humans, of animals, etc. The prisoners see nothing but the shadows of the artifacts that the people are carrying on the path, and they assume that the shadows are real. Any voices they hear from the people talking they attribute to the shadows. These prisoners know nothing else — the shadows are reality.

This is our childhood notion of romance, love, marriage, and what creates sustaining peace. We assume that the images we're presented are reality, that if we only achieve the "right" things and find the "right" relationship, we'll find happiness. We think that the shadow is the truth when in fact it's a far cry from reality.

Socrates asks what would happen to the people if they were allowed freedom. "Do you not think they would stand? Do you not think they would look towards the firelight?" The problem, of course, is that the people have never actually looked at firelight. Their entire lives they have only looked at the shadows. The firelight would hurt their eyes and they would not understand that the shadows are not reality. "It hurts them to do this (looking at the firelight)."

Socrates says, “Suppose someone tells the freed man that what he’s been seeing all this time has no substance, and that he is now closer to reality and is seeing more accurately, because of the greater reality of things in front of his eyes — what do you think his reaction would be?”

This is our first moment of enlightenment, when we are told that our fantasies of romantic love, marriage, and life are not reality, but that reality is so much richer and deeper than what we have been led to believe. Because we've never seen the truth — the firelight — it's difficult to look at. The light of the truth may be painful to see when you've only looked at shadows your entire life.

Of course, the freed person is bewildered and still believes that what he has been seeing his entire life is reality and the firelight is a lie. If the freed person were forced to look at the firelight, he would run back to the familiarity of what he has known because he believes that what is more familiar is the truth.

Our first instinct is to run back to what we have known our entire lives: the lies about love and romance (love is an omnipresent feeling), that others are responsible for our happiness, that it's not safe to live from our essence or true nature.

(Here is my favorite part for anxiety, so I'm going to quote directly):

“And imagine him being dragged (compelled) forcibly away from the cave up a rough, steep slope, without being released until he’s been pulled out into the sunlight. Wouldn’t this treatment cause him pain and distress? And once he’s reached the sunlight, he wouldn’t be able to see a single one of the things which

are currently taken to be real, would he, because his eyes would be overwhelmed by the sun's beams?

"He wouldn't be able to see things on the surface because he is so used to seeing the shadows in the cave. It would take him time to get used to the situation, first seeing the shadows of people from the sunlight, then eventually being able to see objects in the village. Eventually he would be able to see the heavens during the nighttime and eventually the sun in its proper place."

With anxiety, it feels like we are being dragged out of the cave, kicking and screaming, and it is extremely painful to be subjected to reality. It causes us pain and distress. It will take time for the freed person to adjust to the new knowledge he is receiving. He would only be able to move forward in small steps, as the new sights and knowledge are overwhelming.

Over time, however, the freed person realizes that life is good outside of the cave and will feel sorry for the prisoners still in the cave and want to help them.

In the story, the point is that the enlightened, educated individuals will be dragged out of the cave, kicking and screaming, but once they are enlightened, they feel pity for those in the cave and eventually go back to teach them, despite their resistance. There is a good drawing of the cave on this website: <http://faculty.washington.edu/smcohen/320/cave.htm>

We are often dragged out of the ego-cave kicking and screaming. It hurts to change. It's scary to risk stepping out of the life we've always known and learn new ways of seeing, believing, and behaving. I've worked with clients who have spent years resisting growth, who have all of the tools at their fingertips but resist taking the committed and daily actions that would transform their suffering into

peace. It's not an easy leap; in fact, for many it's the most challenging transition of all and can feel like nothing short of a death experience (because it is). But if you're going to see life as it is instead of watching the shadows of life parade across the cave of your safe and comfortable world, leap you must. It's the only way to freedom.

Lessons from the Mat

Some of my most powerful insights occur during yoga class. Oftentimes I have to force myself onto the mat feeling sluggish and resistant, and then I'll hear my teacher say something like, "Notice what you're feeling right now. Just notice it. Are you tired, hungover, sad, numb? Wherever you are, see if you can meet it with compassion. Accept yourself completely as you are in this moment." I've learned to notice my tiredness and how often I want to retreat into the comfort of child's pose, but then, instead of indulging the tired part of me, I choose to meet it with compassion but continue in my practice.

Every time I feel the urge to lie down, I say to myself, "There's the tired part of me." and then breathe into it. And I do the same when I am in a more challenging pose and my inner Self pleads, "Please stop! This is too hard!" Knowing that it's not too hard and that I benefit from staying in the pose, I meet myself with, "I hear you. I know you want me to stop. Yes, it is really hard." And then the release and the flood of *prana*, as we say in yoga, when the energy floods through the body, creating a feeling of fullness and aliveness. I don't stay in the pose because I listen to the "shoulds" of an inner taskmaster, but because I respond with love and presence to the places in me that want to take the easy way out.

These are the subtle and daily ways that we learn to meet ourselves and our resistance. The yoga example is benign compared to the barrage of the [running commentary](#) delivered by many of my clients' Inner Critic (i.e.: "You're never enough. You're going to be miserable forever. Nothing you do is good enough. Your only chance for happiness is to learn to be perfect. You can't mess up. You can't make a mistake." etc). How do you meet this barrage with compassion? It's not easy, but it's in recognizing that the Inner Critic and all forms of resistance are

a *part* of you, but are not the true you. You are not your thoughts and you are not your wounds. You are infinitely more beautiful, pure, and radiant, and this is the part that is waiting for your attention. When you can stand, even for a moment, in the truth of who you are, you can begin to respond to the incessant lies that keep you stuck behind the brick wall of resistance. And then you will begin to break through and find your way out of anxiety and doubt and into freedom.

“I’m the Exception” and Other Lines from Ego-Mind

The ego is almost entirely committed to convincing us that the problem lies in our relationship and that the only thing we can do is leave. Remember: the ego loathes change, and it knows that if you confront yourself and dive into another layer of healing (or perhaps the first layer of healing), an aspect of ego will die. Thus, it throws out arguments to convince you over and over again that the problem isn't your fear; it's just that you're with the wrong person or that you're too broken or too _____ to do this work.

Here are some common ego-lines — also known as resistance — and after working with hundreds of clients and guiding thousands of people through my courses, I've heard them all!

1. Relationship anxiety doesn't really exist. Sheryl is a quack and doesn't know what she's talking about. If relationship anxiety is real, why isn't everyone talking about it?
2. I'm too broken or wounded to heal from this. My only choice is to leave and live alone forever.
3. I'm too young; everyone says that young love isn't meant to last.
4. I'm just too scared to leave. I don't want to hurt my partner. I don't want to start over again.
5. I'm scared to leave because of my age and I'm scared I won't find anyone else.
6. I never felt in love. Never had the butterflies.
7. We're too different. That's a red flag, right?
8. We're not on the exact same page religiously; certainly that's a red flag.
9. I had doubts from the beginning; that's a sign that this isn't meant to be.
10. I don't have time to do this work. Something will have to go and the most obvious thing is my relationship.
11. I'm the exception.
12. I'm the worst-case scenario.
13. Everything has to be perfect before I can start working on myself.

As soon as you buy into the ego-line, you're hooked and sunk. Now you've fused with fear and there's nowhere else to turn, and before you know it you'll be dragged down the rabbit hole of anxiety.

Just like working with intrusive thoughts (which we'll dive into in detail in Section 3), the first and most essential step is to identify your ego-lines and then name them. Call them onto the mat. Once you've done that, you've taken the first step toward de-fusing from them (creating a space between you and the thoughts instead of being fused with them), which returns the power to you. For now, try saying something to yourself like, "That's my fear speaking. I can hear it but I'm not listening," and then turn inward and ask what's really needed.