

# Resistance is a friend

Agile Finland Coaching Circle  
1.8.2011 Ari Tikka

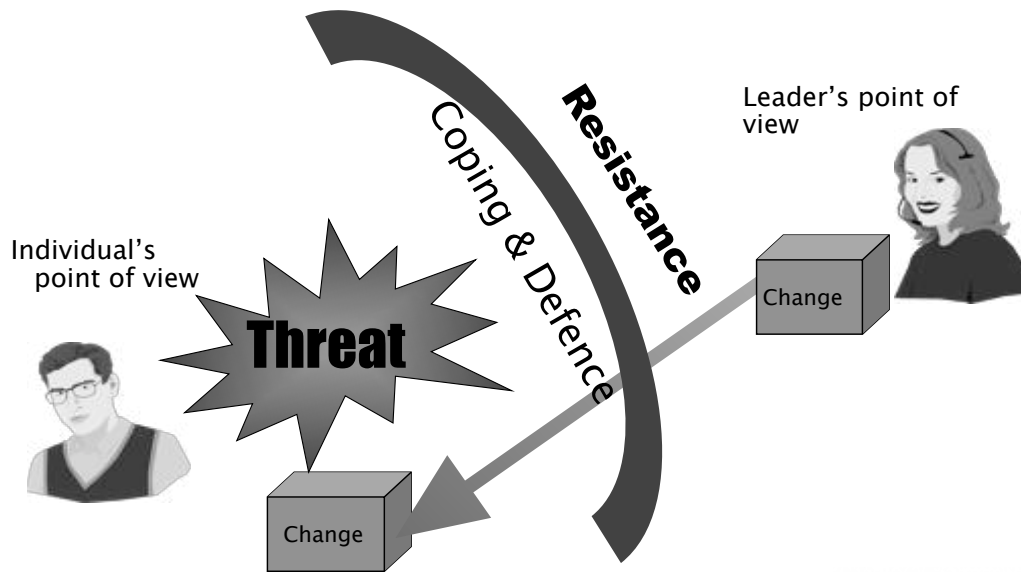
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## Resistance is a friend

- Think again
- Resistance is the friend of the leaders. When You face resistance:
  1. You are in touch with what is really happening
  2. You have the opportunity to work with reality

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# Leading is working with the resistance



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## Coping and Defense

- Coping mechanism
  - People act in order to cope with anxiety
  - For example concrete actions: studying, learning, adapting
- Defense mechanism
  - When experiencing that one can not fix or cope with an external or internal threat, the psyche defends from the anxiety by distorting the observation and perception of the reality.
  - Defenses are related to an unconscious feeling of fear or threat
  - Defenses stick, if one does not process them
  - Defenses always have a flavor of self-deception

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# Coping and defense

- A similar action may be sometimes be Coping and sometimes be Defending
  - Action or acting out?
  - Repression or Concentrating to the essential?
- Both coping and defense are OK. They are appropriate functional everyday phenomena.
- There is a reason to act, when defense starts to dominate

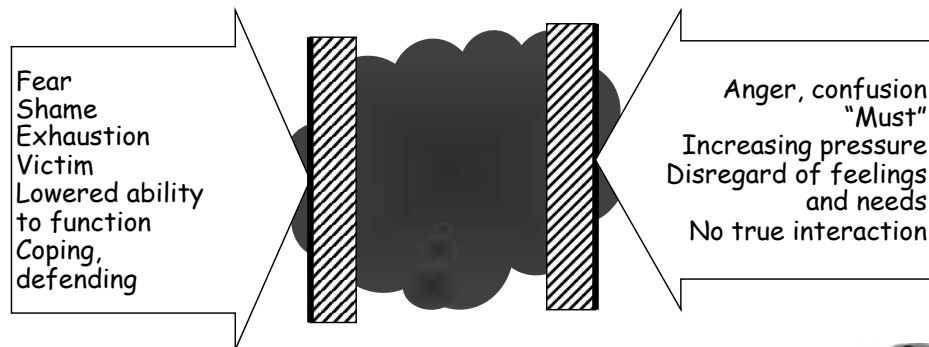
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# Recognizing defenses

- Defences are stimulated by:
  - Unclear principal task, working environment and leadership
  - Internal and external realities do not meet
  - Isolation, minimal interaction
  - Unsecurity, uncertainty
- Recognizing defenses in oneself and others helps to understand human activities.
- Understanding the situation always requires information about wider circumstances.

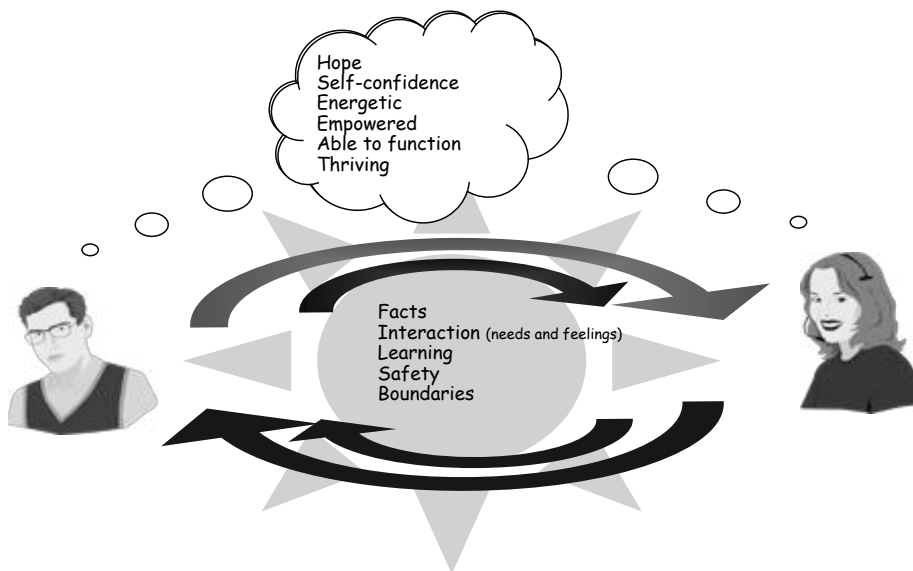
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# Resistance in interaction



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# Processing resistance



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# Conscious and unconscious resistance

- Conscious resistance is easy and fair
  - Open challenging
- Unconscious resistance is sneaky; emotional, unclear
  - Takes time and energy
  - People resist seeing unconscious resistance
- Both exist at the same time in various mixes

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# Possible signs of unconscious resistance

- Forgetting the agreed principal task
- Postponing and delaying,
- Intellectual arguing about theory so that reality is blurred or forgotten,
- Staying away, busying- There is something more important.
- Delegating things away
- Being late, staying away, forgetting things
- Lack of commitment
- Avoiding, shunning
- Neglecting the value of the topic
- Extended talking about irrelevant things
- Not keeping contracts
- Not understanding, but not asking
- Strong feelings of lameness, stagnation
- Expressing irrelevance or aggressive resistance.

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# Resistance is a part of work

- Resistance is integral to all new; change, learning and work
  - Resistance enables understanding and adaptation to the change
  - Resistance has an important psychological function. It acts as the guard against things that arouse too much fear or anxiety. Too much fear or anxiety would reduce the ability to function.
- It is easier to work with resistance, when one is conscious about it.
- The inclination to resist differs greatly between individuals and in different situations

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# Leading is working with the resistance

- Leadership constantly works with resistance
- Forms of resistance change and develop while the work progresses
- Resistance is worked by keeping the group in the principal task
- You may make the resistance visible for the group, if the occasion is appropriate. It is best to point out observations how the work is (not) progressing and ask how to continue.
- Resistance transfers from team to the leader. The leader needs to observe his/her own resistance in order to be able to function.
- Ability to tolerate separation is necessary for leaders.
- Appreciating the needs and feelings helps to learn what is going on

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## Practical tips...

- Return to the principal task
- Understanding ones own role
- Understanding the phenomenon of the resistance
- The possibility to reflect experiences afterwards
- Planning the occasion
- In the situation:
  - Keep available a note about Your central task and targets
  - Distance yourself from the group, walk away from the group
  - Check Your posture and breathing

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## Bonus: Group defences

- “The Group” is one more person, imaginary and collective
  - “Team decides”, “Team helps”, “Team norms”
- The members build an authority relation to their image of the “group”
- Psychology has recognized three communication patterns:
  - Dependency, flight-fight and pair forming
- Groups (all members) may resist by concentrating to these patterns instead of reality (the principal task)

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