

Techniques for Responding to Resistance

You will use this handout for most of the exercises that follow.

Simple reflections stay close in content but keep the conversation moving. Remember to consider carefully on which elements you wish to focus.

Double-sided reflections include both sides of the ambivalence.

Amplified reflections add some intensity to the resistant part of the statement.

Agreement-with-a-twist involves either a reflection or a statement of agreement, followed by a reframe.

Reframing places a client's statement in a new light, a new perspective. This approach often involves recasting the resistant or sustain talk element.

Siding with the negative or **coming alongside** responses acknowledge that this may not be the right time, place, or circumstance for change.

Emphasizing personal choice and control responses make the obvious obvious. Such a response reminds clients that only they can choose to change their behavior. In the end, it is entirely up to them to decide if a change is needed and how that change will happen.

Shifting focus responses acknowledge that the current area feels unproductive and shift to an area that may be more helpful or productive for the client. This shift may be accomplished by a reflection, summary, question, or a combination of these.



Simple Reflections in Response to Resistance and Status Quo Talk

Generate simple reflections in response to client statements of resistance or status quo. Begin by writing two responses to each, and try to vary the focus on each. Use the handout, Techniques for Responding to Resistance, as a reminder if needed.

I thought red wine was supposed to be good for your heart. That's why I drink it each night.

1.

2.

I know it would be good for me, but it's just too hard to exercise regularly. I'm too busy.

1.

2.

I think everyone is blowing this out of proportion. So I drank a little too much at the holiday party.

1.

2.

I agree, it's not perfect, but you don't understand what it's like. It's different now.

1.

2.

(cont.)

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Simple Reflections in Response to Resistance and Status Quo Talk (p. 2 of 2)

OK, so there are some costs. I'm not someone who wants to spend the rest of my life coloring inside the lines. I want to have a little fun and spend a little money.

1.

2.

I don't think the meds helped all that much, and I really didn't like the way they made me feel.

1.

2.

Listen, I know my boss is mad. Still, I'm not going to take any crap from anybody. You show weakness here, and you'll get eaten alive.

1.

2.

I tried all of those things, and none of them worked. Don't you get it?

1.

2.

Why do I have to be here? I know things aren't perfect, but I am doing better. There have been no incidents with my kids, so why do you still make me come?

1.

2.

EXERCISE 6.2

Double-Sided and Amplified Reflections in Response to Resistance and Status Quo Talk

Now use a double-sided (DS) or amplified (A) reflection. Remember, double-sided reflections include both sides of the ambivalence, whereas amplified reflections add some zing to the resistant part of the statement. Try to write one of each type. Use the handout, *Techniques for Responding to Resistance*, as a reminder if you need it.

I thought red wine was supposed to be good for your heart. That's why I drink it each night.

1. DS—

2. A—

I know it would be good for me, but it's just too hard to exercise regularly. I'm too busy.

1. DS—

2. A—

I think everyone is blowing this out of proportion. So I drank a little too much at the holiday party.

1. DS—

2. A—

I agree it's not perfect, but you don't understand what it's like. It's different now.

1. DS—

2. A—

(cont.)

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Double-Sided and Amplified Reflections in Response to Resistance and Status Quo Talk (p. 2 of 2)

OK, so there are some costs. I'm not someone who wants to spend the rest of my life coloring inside the lines. I want to have a little fun and spend a little money.

1. DS—

2. A—

I don't think the meds helped all that much, and I really didn't like the way they made me feel.

1. DS—

2. A—

Listen, I know my boss is mad. Still, I'm not going to take any crap from anybody. You show weakness here, and you'll get eaten alive.

1. DS—

2. A—

I tried all of those things, and none of them worked. Don't you get it?

1. DS—

2. A—

Why do I have to be here? I know things aren't perfect, but I am doing better. There have been no incidents with my kids, so why do you still make me come?

1. DS—

2. A—

EXERCISE 63

Other Responses to Resistance and Status Quo Talk

Now using the same prompts a third time, try to use one of the other forms of response (i.e., reframing, agreement with a twist, siding with the negative, personal choice, and shifting focus). It may not be possible to use the last two categories each time without sounding redundant, but try your best. Use the handout, Techniques for Responding to Resistance, as a reminder if you need it.

I thought red wine was supposed to be good for your heart. That's why I drink it each night.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

I know it would be good for me, but it's just too hard to exercise regularly. I'm too busy.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

I think everyone is blowing this out of proportion. So I drank a little too much at the holiday party.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

(cont.)

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Other Responses to Resistance and Status Quo Talk (p. 2 of 3)

I agree it's not perfect, but you don't understand what it's like. It's different now.

1.

2.

3.

OK, so there are some costs. I'm not someone who wants to spend the rest of my life coloring inside the lines. I want to have a little fun and spend a little money.

1.

2.

3.

I don't think the meds helped all that much, and I really didn't like the way they made me feel.

1.

2.

3.

Other Responses to Resistance and Status Quo Talk (p. 3 of 3)

Listen, I know my boss is mad. Still, I'm not going to take any crap from anybody. You show weakness here, and you'll get eaten alive.

1.

2.

3.

I tried all of those things, and none of them worked. Don't you get it?

1.

2.

3.

Why do I have to be here? I know things aren't perfect, but I am doing better. There have been no incidents with my kids, so why do you still make me come?

1.

2.

3.

Sample Responses for Exercises 6.1, 6.2, and 6.3

I thought red wine was supposed to be good for your heart. That's why I drink it each night.

1. This is confusing to you. You thought you were doing something good for your heart. (Simple)
2. And you're right—it does look like there is some health benefit to red wine, along with the risks. (Agreement with a twist)
3. You drink wine to be healthy. What else do you do to be healthy? (Shifting focus)

I know it would be good for me, but it's just too hard to exercise regularly. I'm too busy.

1. You're really busy. (Simple)
2. You couldn't possibly exercise, given everything that's on your plate. (Amplified)
3. It's hard to know where health fits into all these other competing demands, and yet you know it's important. (Double-sided reflection)

I think everyone is blowing this out of proportion. So I drank a little too much at the holiday party.

1. You had a little too much. (Simple)
2. On the one hand, it feels like people are overreacting and, on the other, you know that you drank a little more than you would've liked to. (Double-sided)
3. So what you thought would be fun has become something else—all because of a little alcohol. (Reframe)

I agree it's not perfect, but you don't understand what it's like. It's different now.

1. Things have changed. (Simple)
2. This may not be an area where you can change right now. (Siding with the negative)
3. I don't understand. If I did, I might see how hard it is for you to consider a change. (Agreement with a twist)

OK, so there are some costs. I'm not someone who wants to spend the rest of my life coloring inside the lines. I want to have a little fun and spend a little money.

1. You want to enjoy your life. (Simple)
2. You want to enjoy your life and are willing to take on the costs that might bring. (Double-sided reflection)
3. And it feels like an either-or choice. You can't have both. (Reframe)

(cont.)

Sample Responses for Exercises 6.1, 6.2, and 6.3 (cont.)

I don't think the meds helped all that much, and I really didn't like the way they made me feel.

1. The meds didn't make much difference. (Simple)
2. The meds didn't help you at all. (Amplified)
3. You may be willing to put up with how you feel because the meds are too problematic. (Siding with the Negative)

Listen, I know my boss is mad. Still, I'm not going to take any crap from anybody. You show weakness here, and you'll get eaten alive.

1. You're not going to show weakness. (Simple)
2. Even though you know you're tough enough to take it, you wonder what it may cost you with the boss. (Double-sided reflection)
3. And that's the struggle. Because you know that by fighting, it gives them power to decide what you will do. (Agreement with a twist)

I tried all of those things, and none of them worked. Don't you get it?

1. It feels like I don't understand. (Simple)
2. Nothing worked at all, not even a little bit. (Amplified)
3. Despite the fact that things haven't changed, you keep trying. (Reframe)

Why do I have to be here? I know things aren't perfect, but I am doing better. There have been no incidents with my kids, so why do you still make me come?

1. You're ready to be done. (Simple)
2. Things are better, and maybe there are still a few troublesome spots. (Double-sided reflection)
3. It feels like I'm making you come, rather than you making that choice yourself. I think there are some things we might still work on, and yet you're the one who has to decide about whether those are worth the hassle of coming. On the flip side is the court stuff, but I can't decide that for you. It really is your call. (Emphasizing personal choice)