

R-E-S-P-E-C-T...

October 26, 2006 by [lifeshifting](#)

Good morning! Can you hear the beat? I don't know about you but whenever I see those 7 letters written this way—R-E-S-P-E-C-T—I immediately hear the sound of Aretha Franklin's 1967 classic hit pounding in my ears. If you haven't heard it for a while, I highly recommend you dig into that old record collection...I don't know about you, but Aretha gets me going every time!

And this time, I needed her. You see, the topic for today's post has been swirling around in my emotional space since a week ago, when I last spoke with my writing partner, Judy, and we started to dissect one of the key, if not *THE KEY* principle of Life-Shifting: RESISTANCE. In fact, if there were a song titled "R-E-S-I-S-T-A-N-C-E"...by just about anyone (of Aretha's stature!)I'd surely have had that one pounding in my head for a week. Bottom line: it has taken me a week to work through my own resistance in order to be able to start writing about it! So, that's why I need to start off this post by showing a little R-E-S-P-E-C-T. Respect for resistance. Respect for my ability to ignore, deny, and otherwise be completely unconscious to my own resistance. Resistance is stealthy, subtle, and unfathomably powerful. And yet, without working through it, there is absolutely no chance for life to shift in any meaningful way.

By now, if you've read last week's post on death, you may be saying to yourself, well Dr J, this one is rather obvious: we all resist death! Even those tiny, seemingly imperceptible 'deaths' that I was speaking about, like giving up my attachment to caffeine (I confess, I have a StarB right by my left hand here, that habit is still very much alive!), we resist with all our might. So, of course, resistance, in all its blatant and not-so-blatant manifestations, is going to rear up and make its presence known whenever change is afoot. On some level, I suppose what we are pointing to here is a survival instinct. It is deep...and it does not budge without a battle.

For those of you with a psychological orientation, and perhaps a Jungian bent, what I am talking about here is the resistance of the ego (that sense of a personality called "me")to relinquish its hold on what I might call the little "selves" (those labels and identities to which we become attached, without which we feel lost and vulnerable)in order for something new, something bigger, something MORE—what Jung might refer to as an **archetypal Self** (with a capital "S")—to emerge. The dynamic here represents a deep internal conflict between our urge to grow, change and become more fully human and the urge to remain small, safe, and comfortable. Resistance, both conscious and unconscious, holds the key.

The big challenge when working with resistance is **recognizing it in the first place!** You see, for most of us resistance appears in the form that I like to call "P & P"—pain and projection. Inevitably, as life goes along and we hit a snag—a breakdown in relationship, a fight with the boss, a life event that displeases us—we can shift very quickly (sometimes in a nanosecond!) from feeling joy to feeling pain. In those first seconds or moments of

pain, we immediately RESIST the feeling and our ego's response is to project the feelings on to someone else. It shows up in subtle (and sometimes not-so-subtle) forms but always with declarations, spoken or unspoken, that start with every pronoun except "I". "I" is last on the list.

This is perhaps the one and only time when it is NOT "me first". Rather, first on the list we find: "you", "they" or "he/she", as in "you did it", "It's your fault", "They did it", etc. This is projection 101. Starting from the day we realized that it is easier to blame others than to accept criticism and take the heat—somewhere around four years old—we start earning our Ph.D. in projection. Real problems only begin many years later when the "victim" mode becomes the default mechanism, and we become oblivious to the fact that what we are really doing is RESISTING having to look at ourselves, RESISTING change, RESISTING taking full responsibility for our reactions to the world. Yuck.

Of course, none of us is immune to this "P & P" affliction. This past weekend my partner and I spent a gloriously romantic weekend in Montreal, enjoying the sights and sounds of this deliciously urbane, European city that lies only one hour north of New York by plane. As you might imagine there were many moments of ecstatic joy—amazing food (real butter croissants—instead of the cardboard Starbucks version), amazing architecture (we want to do a whole book just on creative staircases on the back streets of Montreal!), amazing shopping (shops in New York should send all their sales staff to Montreal for training...), etc.

There were also a few lows. Tense moments of indecision about what to do next, uncomfortable conversations in the midst of a splendid dinner as politics made its way onto the scene, or disagreements over quantity versus quality as fatigue began to set in. Truth is, I came back exhausted. Happy yes, but also aware of an indeterminate PAIN in my gut, my back, and my head, which was screaming: "if only they hadn't done X, the trip might have been perfect." Now X, of course, represents a long list of what my partner did WRONG. Those irritating things that, damn, I just don't like. So are you thinking yet that I am a brat? Well, you should be. I am. We all are. Just stop for a moment and think about the last travel experience you had with a partner or friend in which you came home thinking, "never again!" Ummm, look in any mirrors after that trip?

To make matters worse, I carried this foul energy around with me for a couple of days, mostly holding it as "not my fault" that I was tired, irritable, and unable to sit down and write about resistance! HAH! There's a laugh. I was so caught up in my own resistance to looking at myself and how little I am willing to change, how tight I hold on to my own self-centered bad habits, how little criticism my ego is able to handle—that I became virtually unable to move. But MOVING is what breaks resistance.

And that is exactly what was required: moving.

And here, once again (see earlier posts), is the simple, but not easy, answer to the dilemma of resistance: it is always held first, in the body. It shows up as anxiety, stress, aches and pains and if it is not attended to promptly (which is often the case with our

tendency towards denial!), it rapidly devolves into illness, even depression. So what to do? Well, you've got to shake it loose! Break up the pattern of victim energy that settles into mind, heart and body. Only then you can see it, be with it, work through it, laugh at it (and yourself), and let it go!!!

For me, yoga helps. Yoga is all about resistance. Yoga brings you right up to the edge of your physical, emotional, and mental stopping points, and asks you each time, in a new way, to move through them. Yoga, in its goal of bringing us bodily, emotionally, and spiritually into union with the divine within, asks us to break through the boundaries of who we think we are and what we think we can do/be.

Yesterday's class was all about opening the hips. Yikes. Bad news for me. As the instructor pointed out, the lower chakra area of the body—the hips, lower back and abdomen—are where we hold most of our fear, anger, and, you guessed it, resistance. It is that part of the body that grounds us and holds us and supports our stance as upright beings on the planet. BUT, it is also that part of the body that most resists change. Hips, especially for men, are usually the most resistant to opening, releasing, and relaxing. Perfect timing for me, as it were...a gift from Spirit.

So as I suffered through the excruciating pain (with no one to project onto, except perhaps the “sadistic” instructor!), of opening my hip sockets in directions I never even knew legs could go, something snapped. Not a bone, thank god, but my ego. I surrendered, or should I say, “it” surrendered...and something deeper, more essential, more loving, compassionate and real, emerged. Returned. Awakened. But truth be told, something also had died in this process, something heretofore invulnerable: my self-righteousness. My attachment to being right. Split open, both figurately and literally, my hips hurt and my heart broke. I wept.

From that moment forward, I withdrew the projection, took back the sword of responsibility, and softened to the core. I remembered my compassion for myself, for my partner, even for the yoga instructor...but most importantly, for myself.

We all go through this cycle over and over again...and no matter how good we get at turning our attention inward, onto our own RESISTANCE, we always still feel a bit like a deer caught in the headlights. What me? Project? Still, eh? Ouch. Ok, time to lighten up and be HUMAN. Learn to respect the big “R”...and know that it is just trying to protect you.

So, as you move through your day today, get humble...and look for those pain points...don't slough them off as simple “anxiety”, “aches & pains”...instead, with deep humility, consider these questions:

1. Am I willing to consider that my stress, my anxiety, and all my aches and pains may be my body's way of signaling that change is afoot?

2. Am I willing to consider that some identity that I wear as protective armor might have outworn its usefulness?

3. What do I most resist? Is it possible that this may be what I most need to change?

Tough questions, eh? Well, to the practice of Life-Shifting, they are core. They deserve our respect. And a chuckle. Maybe a guffaw. At the very least, we might as well welcome them with a smile—they're likely to be hanging around for a long time to come!

Respectfully yours, Dr J