



DO THE WORK!

Also by Steven Pressfield

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The War of Art

DO THE WORK!

Overcome Resistance and get out of your own way

By Steven Pressfield



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The Domino Project

Published by Do You Zoom, Inc.

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LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING IN PUBLICATION DATA Pressfield, Steven, 1943—

Do The Work!: Overcome Resistance and get out of your own way / Steven Pressfield

p. cm.

ISBN 978-1-936719-01-3

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For Ellie

Contents

[Foreword](#)

[About This Book](#)

[ORIENTATION: ENEMIES AND ALLIES](#)

[1 BEGINNING](#)

[2 MIDDLE](#)

[2 MIDDLE](#)

[3 END](#)

[Acknowledgments](#)

[About The Domino Project](#)

[About the Cover](#)

Foreword

Right there, in your driveway, is a really fast car. Not one of those stupid Hamptons-style, rich-guy, showy cars like a Ferrari, but an honest fast car, perhaps a Subaru WRX. And here are the keys. No, don't go drive it.

Right there, on the runway, is a private jet, ready to fly you wherever you want to go. Here's the pilot standing by. Go. Leave.

Right there, in your hand, is a Chicago Pneumatics 0651 hammer. You can drive a nail through just about anything with it, again and again if you choose. Time to use it.

And here's a keyboard, connected to the entire world. Here's a publishing platform you can use to interact with just about anyone, just about any time, for free. You wanted a level playing field, one where you have just as good a shot as anyone else? Here it is. Do the work.

That's what we're all waiting for you to do—to do the work.

Steven Pressfield is the author of the most important book you've never read: *The War of Art*. It will help you understand why you're stuck, it will kick you in the pants, and it will get you moving. You should, no, you must buy a copy as soon as you finish reading this.

In this manifesto, Steve gets practical, direct, and personal. Read it fast; then read it again and take notes. Then buy a copy for everyone else who's stuck and push them to get to work as well.

Hurry.

Seth Godin
Hastings-on-Hudson, January 2011

On the field of the Self stand a knight and a dragon.

You are the knight. Resistance is the dragon.

About This Book

This book is designed to coach you through a project (a book, a ballet, a new business venture, philanthropic enterprise) from conception to finished product, seeing it from the point of view of Resistance.

We'll hit every predictable Resistance Point along the way—those junctures where fear, self-sabotage, procrastination, self-doubt, and all those other demons we're all so familiar with can be counted upon to strike.

Where butts need to be kicked, we shall kick them. Where kinder, gentler methods are called for, we'll get out the kid gloves.

One note: This document is articulated for the most part in the lexicon of a writer—i.e., the mode used is that of conceiving and constructing plays, novels, or screenplays. But the principles can be applied with equal effectiveness to any form of creative endeavor, including such seemingly far-afield enterprises as the acquisition of physical fitness, the recovery from a broken heart, or the pursuit of any objective—emotional, intellectual, or spiritual—that involves moving from a lower or less-conscious plane to a higher one.

ORIENTATION ENEMIES AND ALLIES

Our Enemies

The following is a list of the forces arrayed against us as artists and entrepreneurs:

1. Resistance (i.e., fear, self-doubt, procrastination, addiction, distraction, timidity, ego and narcissism, self-loathing, perfectionism, etc.)
2. Rational thought
3. Friends and family

Resistance

What exactly is this monster? The following few chapters from *The War of Art* will bring us up to speed:

Resistance's Greatest Hits

The following is a list, in no particular order, of those activities that most commonly elicit Resistance:

1. The pursuit of any calling in writing, painting, music, film, dance, or any creative art, however marginal or unconventional.
2. The launching of any entrepreneurial venture or enterprise, for profit or otherwise.
3. Any diet or health regimen.
4. Any program of spiritual advancement.
5. Any activity whose aim is the acquisition of chiseled abdominals.
6. Any course or program designed to overcome an unwholesome habit or addiction.
7. Education of every kind.

8. ~~Any act of political, moral, or ethical courage, including the decision to change for the better~~ some unworthy pattern of thought or conduct in ourselves.
9. The undertaking of any enterprise or endeavor whose aim is to help others.
10. Any act that entails commitment of the heart—the decision to get married, to have a child, weather a rocky patch in a relationship.
11. The taking of any principled stand in the face of adversity.

In other words, any act that rejects immediate gratification in favor of long-term growth, health, or integrity.

Or, expressed another way, any act that derives from our higher nature instead of our lower. Any of these acts will elicit Resistance.

Now: what are the characteristics of Resistance?

Resistance Is Invisible

Resistance cannot be seen, heard, touched, or smelled. But it can be felt. We experience it as an energy field radiating from a work-in-potential.

Resistance is a repelling force. It's negative. Its aim is to shove us away, distract us, prevent us from doing our work.

Resistance Is Insidious

Resistance will tell you anything to keep you from doing your work. It will perjure, fabricate, falsify, seduce, bully, cajole. Resistance is protean. It will assume any form, if that's what it takes to deceive you.

Resistance will reason with you like a lawyer or jam a nine-millimeter in your face like a stickup man.

Resistance has no conscience. It will pledge anything to get a deal, then double-cross you as soon as your back is turned. If you take Resistance at its word, you deserve everything you get.

Resistance is always lying and always full of shi

Resistance Is Impersonal

Resistance is not out to get you personally. It doesn't know who you are and doesn't care. Resistance is a force of nature. It acts objectively.

Though it feels malevolent, Resistance in fact operates with the indifference of rain and transits the heavens by the same laws as stars. When we marshal our forces to combat Resistance, we must remember this

Resistance Is Infallible

Like a magnetized needle floating on a surface of oil, Resistance will unfailingly point to true North—meaning that calling or action it most wants to stop us from doing.

We can use thi

We can use it as a compas

We can navigate by Resistance, letting it guide us to that calling or purpose that we must follow before all others.

Rule of thumb: The more important a call or action is to our soul's evolution, the more Resistance we will feel toward pursuing it.

Resistance Is Universal

We're wrong if we think we're the only ones struggling with Resistance. Everyone who has a bod

experiences Resistance.

Resistance Never Sleeps

Henry Fonda was still throwing up before each stage performance, even when he was seventy-five.

In other words, fear doesn't go away. The warrior and the artist live by the same code of necessity, which dictates that the battle must be fought anew every day.

Resistance Plays for Keeps

Resistance's goal is not to wound or disable.

Resistance aims to kill.

Its target is the epicenter of our being: our genius, our soul, the unique and priceless gift we were put on this earth to give and that no one else has but us. Resistance means business.

When we fight it, we are in a war to the death.

Rational Thought

Next to Resistance, rational thought is the artist or entrepreneur's worst enemy.

Bad things happen when we employ rational thought, because rational thought comes from the ego.

Instead, we want to work from the Self, that is, from instinct and intuition, from the unconscious.

Homer began both *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* with a prayer to the Muse. The Greeks' greatest poets understood that genius did not reside within his fallible, mortal self—but came to him instead from some source that he could neither command nor control, only invoke.

When an artist says “Trust the soup,” she means let go of the need to control (which we can’t do anyway) and put your faith instead in the Source, the Mystery, the Quantum Soup.

The deeper the source we work from, the better our stuff will be—and the more transformative it will be for us and for those we share it with.

Friends and Family

The problem with friends and family is that they know us *as we are*. They are invested in maintaining us as we are.

The last thing we want is to remain as we are.

If you’re reading this book, it’s because you sense inside you a second self, an unlived you.

With some exceptions (God bless them), friends and family are the enemy of this unmanifested you, this unborn self, this future being.

Prepare yourself to make new friends. They will appear, trust me.

Our Allies

Enough for now about the antagonists arrayed against us. Let’s consider the champions on our side:

1. Stupidity
2. Stubbornness
3. Blind faith
4. Passion
5. Assistance (the opposite of Resistance)
6. Friends and family

Stay Stupid

The three dumbest guys I can think of: Charles Lindbergh, Steve Jobs, Winston Churchill. Why? Because any smart person who understood how impossibly arduous were the tasks they had set themselves would have pulled the plug before he even began.

Ignorance and arrogance are the artist and entrepreneur's indispensable allies. She must be clueless enough to have no idea how difficult her enterprise is going to be—and cocky enough to believe she can pull it off anyway.

How do we achieve this state of mind? By staying stupid. By not allowing ourselves to think.

A child has no trouble believing the unbelievable, nor does the genius or the madman. It's only you and I, with our big brains and our tiny hearts, who doubt and overthink and hesitate.

Don't think. Act.

We can always revise and revisit once we've acted. But we can accomplish nothing until we act.

Be Stubborn

Once we commit to action, the worst thing we can do is to stop.

What will keep us from stopping? Plain old stubbornness.

I like the idea of stubbornness because it's less lofty than "tenacity" or "perseverance." We don't have to be heroes to be stubborn. We can just be pains in the butt.

When we're stubborn, there's no quit in us. We're mean. We're mulish. We're ornery.

We're in till the finish.

We will sink our junkyard-dog teeth into Resistance's ass and not let go.

Blind Faith

Is there a spiritual element to creativity? Hell, yes.

Our mightiest ally (our indispensable ally) is belief in something we cannot see, hear, touch, taste, or feel.

Resistance wants to rattle that faith. Resistance wants to destroy it.

There's an exercise that Patricia Ryan Madson describes in her wonderful book, *Improv Wisdom*. (Madson taught improvisational theater at Stanford to standing-room only classes for twenty years.) Here's the exercise:

Imagine a box with a lid. Hold the box in your hand. Now open it.

What's inside?

It might be a frog, a silk scarf, a gold coin of Persia. But here's the trick: no matter how many times you open the box, there is always something in it.

Ask me my religion. That's it.

I believe with unshakeable faith that there will always be something in the box.

Passion

Picasso painted with passion, Mozart composed with it. A child plays with it all day long.

You may think that you've lost your passion, or that you can't identify it, or that you have so much of it, it threatens to overwhelm you. None of these is true.

Fear saps passion.

When we conquer our fears, we discover a boundless, bottomless, inexhaustible well of passion.

Assistance

We'll come back to this later. Suffice it to say for now that as Resistance is the shadow, its opposite—Assistance—is the sun.

Friends and Family

When art and inspiration and success and fame and money have come and gone, who still loves us—and whom do we love?

Only two things will remain with us across the river: our inherent
genius and the hearts we love

In other words, what we do and whom we do it for.

But enough theory. In the next chapter we'll start our novel, kick off our new business, launch our philanthropic enterprise.

First question: When is the best time to start?

1

BEGINNING

- [*Flint and Feather: The Life and Times of E. Pauline Johnson, Tekahionwake* here](#)
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