

Resisting Influence

Prepared by Philip Zimbardo and Cindy X. Wang
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Compiled by *Sniffles*

Introduction

In *The Lucifer Effect*, we examined how social situations lead ordinary people to commit unimaginable acts of violence, discrimination, and indifference to the suffering of others. Many of us hope that if we were placed in such situations, we would be the courageous ones who resist unjust authority, who are immune to compliance tactics, and who never abandon our core beliefs and principles in the face of social pressures. However, the reality is we can never predict our actions without being placed in similar situations. This is one of the recurring themes of "The Lucifer Effect" and something that should not be lost on us as we make everyday decisions.

Indeed, even without being placed in the heat of war, the inhumanity of prisons, or the clutches of social psychologists, our daily lives are wrought with similarly compelling social tensions. This section of the website was created as a springboard for learning how unwanted and unjust influence can impact your daily life and to better equip you to resist these forces. By understanding the contexts of influence and social compliance, become familiar with significant experimental findings from social psychological research, along with some basic terminology, we hope you will become more proficient in identifying common social influence principles and the strategies that professional agents of influence may use to gain your compliance. Finally, we will take you through frameworks that prominent social psychologists have created to understand social influence and identify how you can apply these ideas to your own life. Furthermore, we will discuss ways to utilize your new understanding of the principles of social influence for positive social change, and finally close with some specific hints from Dr. Z on how to resist unwanted influences.

Varieties of Influence

We listen to a debate with each side presenting seemingly compelling reasons to endorse one or another point of view. We get messages from advertisers, from the government, from assorted authorities to take particular actions, like buy a product, vote for a candidate, give blood, avoid impending disasters, and more. Such attempts to influence our attitudes, values or actions are considered forms of persuasive communication. "Do as I say," is its motto. When they are politically motivated with a bias toward a politically relevant action such messages are considered propaganda.

Other times the influence comes not dressed up in words in persuasive messages or visually appealing ads, but simply when the members of a group you are in, or want to belong to, act in a particular way. They don't have to tell you what to do; they simply exhibit the behavior or the style of action that is expected of "good team members." That form of social influence is known as conformity. "Do as we do," is the conformity motto.

Go along with the majority, the consensus and be accepted. Refuse to dress as they do, talk like they do, value what they value, or act in ways that are clearly the accepted social norm for this group, and you are rejected, isolated, expelled, ridiculed. The power of many groups in our lives to influence our thoughts and actions can be enormous, especially when we desperately want to be accepted by any given “in group.”

You don’t need a group to put pressure on you to act as they expect you to do; in fact, much social influence comes from a singular source—another person. Compliance is a form of influence in which direct pressure is put on individuals to take some specific action, such as doing a favor, buying a product. The influence agent doesn’t want to change your mind, only to get you to act on his or her request. Sometimes the request is pro-social, like donating blood in a blood drive, but more often than not, the request is to get people to purchase a variety of products that they might not need or even want initially.

In some special cases, an organization wants to go beyond inducing such specific changes, and actually to get individuals to change in more fundamental ways, to become “true believers” in some ideology or belief system. They want individual members to internalize a set of beliefs and values, even to change their personalities, so that they totally identify with the group’s mission. One common form of this intense personal change is seen in cult recruiting and indoctrination.

Finally, all these sources of social influence are imposed from the outside in, from assorted influence agents on individuals or groups. One of the most powerful forms of influence is self-persuasion, where conditions are set up that encourage individuals to engage in personal thought and decision processes. Obviously we tend to know our strengths and weaknesses better than do others, so we can tailor self-generated persuasive messages likely to be effective. One tactic for inducing self-persuasion comes from role-playing positions that are contrary to one’s beliefs and values. Also when we are resolving a commitment we have made to engage in public behavior that does not follow from our personal beliefs, cognitive dissonance is created. To the extent that we come to believe we made that commitment freely, without (awareness of) external situational pressures, we start to rationalize it and come to convince ourselves that it was the right action and the right position to hold.

There are many books on the science of influence, some of which we will note for your later in depth review. For now, however, we will outline some suggestions about what you can do to weaken or counter each of these varieties of social influence. Some of our advice is specific to a given influence type, other advice is more general in that it focuses on how to develop effective mind sets which will serve you well across many different influence settings. Knowledge of how these influence settings work and what you can do to resist them is the first step in becoming a wiser consumer of social influence. However, you have to be continually vigilant and continually put into operation these resistance tactics for you to inoculate yourself against their insidious power.

How We Are Persuaded

The slogan for understanding persuasive communications is: “Who Says What to Whom, With What Effect?” That means we need to focus on the nature of the Communicator (Who), the nature of the Message (What), the intended Audience (Whom, including You), and the desired outcome of the process (What Effect). There is a large body of research on each of these components of the process by which verbal communications come to influence us. Here we can only highlight the most critical aspects. Communicators are most effective if they are perceived as Credible, meaning having both expertise relevant to their message and also being trustworthy—honest, and unbiased. But pseudo experts who are celebrities that know nothing about the product they are endorsing often seduce us. Take time to inquire into the expert background of persuasive communicators and the extent to which they might be biased, making big bucks when you do what they request. Communications come in many forms, some rational, some hit at our emotions, some make evident the action we should take, and others leave the action implicit. Also some messages are simple, others complicated, some lead with the request, others build up to it. Ideally, we need to process communications systematically, that means taking the time to figure out what is being requested, what evidence is being presented, and how contrary views are dealt with. Too often, we take short cuts, and process the information only peripherally, meaning we are too focused on the packaging and not the product. We may give excessive value to the speaker’s resonant tone of voice, or his or her good looks, and too little to what they are really hawking. Always try to figure out Who this message is intended for, people like you, those from a particular background, social class, ethnic group, degree of intelligence. Finally, figure out what action is being requested, immediately or delayed, small act now but likely a bigger one later, just changing how you think and feel about the product, or pushing you to own it or vote for it.

New research outlines six characteristics of effective communications. Being aware of what makes their messages “stick” is one way to better resist their influence. Messages that survive and not die on the message vine are those that are: 1) Simple, brief as possible but still profound; 2) Unexpected, sufficiently surprising to catch the attention of the audience; 3) Concrete, detailed examples based on real life experiences; 4) Credible, delivered by someone the audience can trust; 5) Emotional, makes audience feel as well as think, and 6) Tells a Story, in a narrative that can be remembered and retold to others. These ideas have emerged from both academic and commercial research summarized by the Heath brothers, Chip and Dan in their new book, “Made to Stick.” (See references: For more details about persuasive communications and other forms of influence, I recommend you examine the book I wrote with Michael Leippe, *The psychology of attitude change and social influence* (See Selected References at the end of this guide).

Why We Conform: The Power of Groups

Whenever we change our behavior, views, and attitudes in response to the real or imagined presence of others, we are experiencing conformity. Why we conform is a topic

of great interest to social psychologists. In particular, the classic studies of Solomon Asch and Muzafer Sherif have shed light on the determinants of conformity. Their research and that of others (Morton Deutsch and Hal Gerard) has demonstrated two main types of conformity: informational and normative. Informative conformity often occurs in situations in which there is high uncertainty and ambiguity. In an unfamiliar situation, we are likely to shape our behavior to match that of others. The actions of others inform us of the customs and accepted practices in a situation. Others inform us of what is right to do, how to behave in new situations.

In addition to conforming to the group norms due to lack of knowledge, we also conform when we want to be liked by the group. This type of conformity, called normative conformity, is the dominant form of social conformity when we are concerned about making a good impression in front of a group. Though we may disagree secretly with the group opinion, we may verbally adopt the group stance so that we seem like a team player rather than a deviant.

Both of these pressures impact us every day, for good or for worse. A staple of a functioning society is that people follow social norms such as obeying traffic laws, respecting others' property, and diffusing aggression in non-violent ways. However, conformity can have deleterious effects if one conforms automatically without questioning of the validity of social norms. In Nazi Germany, many ordinary people did not dissent to the ongoing atrocities because few other people resisted. Similarly, in the Stanford Prison Experiment, the subjects who were randomly assigned as guards gradually adopted the behavior of cruel and demanding prison guards because that became the behavioral norm in an alien situation.

In our daily decisions, we should also examine whether our reasons justify our actions. In an unfamiliar situation, first ask yourself whether the actions you observe others performing is rational, warranted, and consistent with your own principles before thoughtlessly and automatically adopting them.

Similarly, in a situation in which you want to impress and be accepted by others, ask yourself whether the action conflicts with your moral code, and consider whether you would be willing to compromise your own opinion of yourself just so others would have a higher one of you. Ultimately, you are the only one who has to live with your actions. Also take a time out to find out the correct information.

To resist the powers of group conformity: know what you stand for; determine how really important it is that these other people like you, especially when they are strangers; recognize that there are other groups who would be delighted to have you as a member; take a future perspective to imagine what you will think of your current conforming action at some time in the future.

Cialdini's Principles of Social Influence

Having begun to understand the impetus of social influence, we now move on to the better delineated principles of influence studied by social psychologist Robert Cialdini.

Cialdini is a renowned social psychologist that has done extensive research on the domains in which social influence is most powerful. The following principles play on fundamental human instincts and can be exploited both intentionally and unintentionally by professional influence agents.

Many of these may seem like obvious tactics that advertisers and influence agents will utilize to sway our opinion. However, when we are not prepared to scrutinize and resist them, these principles will often work subliminally and quite powerfully. Thus, an important part of resisting these common influence tactics is awareness of their fundamental operating principles, contexts in which they are most easily provoked, and the best methods to avoid falling prey to them.

We hope that by learning about these principles of persuasion, you will be better able to recognize the situations you are in that may lead to act against your will and then to have the tools to resist unwanted social influence. There are six basic principles, and each one is set in a specific Context. When you are aware of the Context, or the behavioral Setting, you will better recognize the principal at work, when you see the principal operating, you will understand the Context in which it is embedded.

→Reciprocity [*Context: Obligation*]

The Basics

- The rule of reciprocity requires that one person try to repay, in kind, what another person has provided
- Supports the giving of favors since repayment is expected from the recipient
- Sense of future obligation makes it possible to develop continuing relationships, transactions, and exchanges in society
- Members of society are trained from childhood to abide by the reciprocity rule or suffer social disapproval

How It's Exploited

- Rule can apply to uninvited exchanges – when exploited, others can reduce our ability to freely decide, and thus, lead us to react automatically
- Rule can spur unequal exchanges – individuals may agree to perform a substantially larger favor in return for an initial, small one
- Principle also applies to making concessions – you may reciprocate a concession if the other party seems to make one
- Ex. "Door-in-the-face" – relies on persuader making an outrageous, extreme request first, then conceding to a comparatively small request (one desired all along) that will likely be accepted because it appears to make a concession
- Also increases the likelihood person will agree to future requests

Best Defense

Reject initial offers, favors, concessions; redefine them as tricks and no longer feel obligated to respond reciprocally, unless you know the other person and can trust that the initial favor is given meaningfully

→Consistency [*Context: Commitments*]

The Basics

- People desire to look consistent within their words, beliefs, attitudes, and deeds
- Good personal consistency is highly valued by society
- Consistent conduct provides a beneficial approach to daily life
- Affords a valuable shortcut through complex decision-making; being consistent with earlier decisions reduces need to process relevant information in future decisions

How It's Exploited

- Profiteers exploit the principle by inducing people to make an initial commitment, take a stand or position that is consistent with requests that they will later ask of them
- Commitments are most effective when they are active, public, effortful, and are seen as not coerced and internally motivated – influence professionals will try to make it difficult to renege on your previous position
- If they are successful, abiding by this rule may lead to stubborn commitment to an initial position and to actions contrary to one's best interests
- The rule may become self-perpetuating – people will seek to add new reasons and justifications for their behavior even after conditions have changed

Best Defense

- To resist this principle, learn to recognize and resist undue influence of consistency pressures on compliance decisions
- Do not be pressured into accepting requests that you do not want to perform and disregard unjust or falsely obtained initial commitments, however small they seem initially
- Be sensitive to situational variables operating on your decision, separate them from personal variables, external forces on the compliance from internal forces to justify it.

→Social Proof [*Context: Consensus*]

The Basics

- A means to determine what is correct by finding out what other people think is correct
- View behavior as more correct in a given context to the degree we see others performing it
- Principle can be used to stimulate a person's compliance by informing the individual that many other individuals have been complying (unanimous compliance and compliance by famous or authoritative people is most effective)
- Provides us with a shortcut for determining how to behave – while at the same time, makes one vulnerable to persuasion experts
- Most influential under two conditions:
 - Uncertainty – situation is ambiguous; become more likely to attend to the actions of others and accept those actions as more correct
 - Similarity – people are inclined to follow the lead of similar others

How It's Exploited

- The Bandwagon effect – everyone who is anyone is doing it, why not YOU?
- The "In Crowd" has it right, do you want them to accept you or not? So act like them
- As described by C. S. Lewis in "The Inner Ring" (Chp. 12 Lucifer Effect), the power of social proof flows from a combination of our desire to be part of the special inner circle and the social manipulators who recognize this need and try to lure us into false inner circles that exploit us.

Best Defense

- Reduce susceptibility to this principle by developing counterarguments for what similar people are doing, and recognizing that their actions should not form the sole basis of your own
- Be aware that the others may have a biased reason for the action they are advocating
- Be aware that the others may be misinformed
- Remember the entire group might be wrong-headed because the leader has biased their opinions – "group think."

→Liking [*Context: Friendship*]

The Basics

- People prefer to say "yes" to individuals they know and like
- We want people to like us and we like those who show that they like us

How It's Exploited

- Persuasion experts manipulate common factors that influence their likeability.
- Features that influence liking:
 - Physical attractiveness – engender "halo" effect that extends to favorable impressions of other traits such as talent, kindness, and intelligence – attractive people usually more successful in changing attitudes and getting requests granted
 - Similarity – we like people who are like us; we more willing to say "yes" to them, often in an unthinking manner
 - Praise – compliments generally enhance liking and compliance; although can backfire if used excessively and transparently
 - Familiarity – repeated contact with a person or thing normally facilitates liking; holds when contact takes place under positive, not negative circumstances
 - Association – making connections to positive things, profiteers seek to share positivity through process of association
 - Shadowing- influence agent exhibits non-verbal behaviors that match those of the target individual, creates a pseudo-comparability

Best Defense

- Resist this principle by developing a special sensitivity to suspicious and undue liking from the requester
- Separate the requester from the request, and make compliance decisions based solely on the merits of the offer – not your emotions about the requester.

→Authority [Context: Credibility]

The Basics

- Milgram's studies of obedience provide evidence of a strong pressure for compliance with the requests of authority figures
- Strength of tendency to obey comes from systematic socialization of society members that obedience constitutes correct conduct
- Frequently adaptive to obey dictates of genuine authorities because such individuals usually possess high levels of knowledge, wisdom, and power
- Deference to authorities can occur in a mindless fashion as a decision-making shortcut
- Tendency to respond to "symbols and signs of authority" rather than to its substance
- Failure to distinguish between Just and Unjust Authority

How It's Exploited

- Experiments show that certain authority symbols effectively promote compliance:
 - Titles
 - Clothing (expensive suits, uniforms, authority symbols, medals, hats, etc.)
 - Authority Location (Office, carpet on floor, etc. Fancy Stationary)
 - Automobiles (association with wealth, privilege, power with authority)

Best Defense

- Question yourself - is this authority truly an expert? How truthful is he or she?
- Direct attention away from symbols and toward evidence for authority status
- Be aware of attempts of others to appear more trustworthy or credible than they are
- Seek independent evaluation of authority deserved status
- Be sensitive to changes in authority behavior, demands over time, from initially acceptable to ultimately abusive and unjust.

→Scarcity [Context: Competition]

The Basics

- People assign more value to opportunities when they are less available—if there are fewer resources and less time to get them, we want it more
- Principle holds true for two reasons:
 - Things that are difficult to attain are typically more valuable – availability of item can serve as a shortcut heuristic cue to its quality

- As things become less accessible, we lose freedoms – respond to loss of freedoms by wanting to have them more than before
- Optimizing conditions for scarcity principle:
 - Value newly scarce items more than items that have been restricted all along
 - Most attracted to scarce resources when we must compete with others for them – have an emotion-arousing quality that makes critical thinking difficult-- as in auctions where bidders will outbid each other and pay more than item is worth rather than to yield up the scarce item

How It's Exploited

- Use of this principle for profit can be seen in compliance techniques as 'limited number' and 'deadline' tactics in which persuaders try to convince us that access is restricted by amount or time.
- Bush administration used a variation of this theme in justifying rush to war in Iraq: time is running out for Saddam unless we stop him now he will use his WMD against us

Best Defense

- We should step back and assess the merits of the opportunity, the value of the item, the deal solely in terms of why we want it
- We should aim to give as objective an evaluation of its personal value, and not overvalue it simply because it is scarce-- or has the appearance of being scarce.

The Science of Social Influence – Anthony Pratkanis

Another social psychologist who has meticulously studied social influence tactics is Anthony Pratkanis. In particular, Pratkanis has analyzed and classified the numerous methods that humans utilize to manipulate and change the attitudes and beliefs of others. While his case study of social influence methods includes too many distinct examples to discuss fully in this guide, we will list a few common examples and the types of categories that these influence tactics commonly fall under. He has also developed a guide for identifying fraudulent practices that many elderly people fall victim to.

Landscaping (Pre-persuasion tactics)

Many influence experts excel at creating a situation in which their opinion or goal seems fair or even favorable. Specifically, how objects are defined and construed, how the problem is presented, and how a request is structured are critically important in our decision process. The following methods are just some of the ways influence agents can have contexts working for them even before you know you're being influenced.

1. Define and label an issue in a favorable manner
2. Association
3. Set expectations
4. Limit and control the number of choices and options
5. Agenda setting
6. Establish a favorable comparison point or set

7. Control the flow of information

Tactics that rely on social relationship (Social credibility and social rules)

One of the most important elements of convincing arguments is a reputable source. We are constantly bombarded by commercials that report experts such as dentists support a brand of toothpaste or professional athletes eat certain breakfast cereals. Although, no one doubts the agenda of advertisers to influence our opinion with these techniques, they are surprisingly effective at tapping essential principles of human behavior. By utilizing the following traits and characteristics, people can play on social relationships in order to persuade.

1. Authority
2. Attractiveness
3. High Status
4. Similarity – “just plain folks like you”
5. Draw on close relationships – friends, family and their well-being
6. Arguing against one’s own self-interest (no agenda)
7. Role-play
8. Social modeling
9. Social reinforcement
10. Multiple sources

Effective message tactics

Aside from the framing and social implications of situations, effective communication depends on the strength and cogency of the message. Arguments that are not very convincing may be presented or disseminated in ways that increase acceptance and compliance. Here, we cite a few of Pratkanis’ examples of how messages can induce the target to generate arguments and reasons for adopting a given course of recommended action.

1. Self-generated persuasion – give the target a chance to generate arguments in support of the position; persuade themselves
2. Vivid appeals – emotionally interesting or compelling
3. Let the message recipient draw his or her conclusion
4. Rhetorical questions
5. Pique interest in message
6. Message fit with pre-existing beliefs, experiences, knowledge
7. Placebic reasons – arguments that appear to make sense but are actually vacuous and lacking information
8. Defusing objections – acknowledging objections and refuting them before a target can raise them
9. Asking for small contributions initially
10. Message length = message strength
11. Repetition of message
12. Primacy effect – order of presentation

Emotional tactics

Emotions are often thought to infringe on our rationality and better judgment. While listening to our instincts and responding to our passions can work in favor of our interests, they are also easily exploited by for influence professionals because emotions affect us so deeply, instantaneously, and indelibly. Pratkanis presents this set of emotional tactics that take advantage of our subjective feelings, arousal, and tensions as the basis for securing influence.

1. Fear
2. Guilt
3. Embarrassment
4. Threat of insult
5. Flattery
6. Empathy
7. Reciprocity
8. Door-in-face – ask for a large favor, retreat and ask for a much smaller favor
9. That’s not all – sweetening the deal
10. Commitment trap
11. Foot-in-the-door – ask a small request than ask for a larger request
12. Low-balling
13. Bait-and-switch
14. Scarcity
15. Anticipatory regret

Offensive and Defensive Tactics for Resisting Influence

Defensive – learn how to detect propaganda

1. Play devil’s advocate
2. Generate questions to ask about a communication
3. Be prepared to debunk bogus appeals
4. Practice how to respond to propaganda attacks

Offensive – steps that will identify common propaganda forms and stop them at their source

1. Know the ways of persuasion and know that you personally may be the victim of propaganda
 - Distinguish source credibility
 - Weaken illusion of your personal invulnerability
2. Monitor your emotions
 - If you’re having an emotional response to a communication, ask yourself why
 - Look for things that induce false emotions
 - Fear, guilt, reciprocity
 - Redefine situation
3. Explore the motivation and credibility of the source
 - What does the source have to gain?
 - Is it an overly manufactured image?
4. Think rationally about any proposal or issue

- What is the issue? Labels and terms?
- Arguments in support and opposing? Cogent? Fair?
- 5. Attempt to understand the full range of options before making a decision
 - What are the choices?
 - What if I chose something other than the recommended option? What are the real consequences?
- 6. Actions not Words
- 7. If you hear something repeatedly, ask why it is being repeated
- 8. If the deal looks too good to be true, it probably is
 - Time sensitive
 - Free gifts
- 9. Teach your children about propaganda
 - Help them develop counterarguments
 - Compare real performance with advertising
- 10. Support efforts to prevent vulnerable groups against exploitative persuasion
- 11. Avoid being dependent on a single source of information
- 12. Separate news from entertainment
- 13. Use communication style as one criteria in making decisions and judgments
- 14. Increase your personal involvement, knowledge, and awareness in important issues
 - Do not be tuned out
 - If it is important, take some time to find out more about it on your own

Cults Want to Own Your Mind and Body

The most extreme form of social influence can be seen in the process by which cults recruit, indoctrinate and retain members, sometimes forever. Unlike all of the other types of influence we have presented here that focus on eliciting a relatively specific change in how you think, feel or act with regard to some issue or product, the ultimate goal of religious and social-political cults is to own you. They want you to disengage from your former family and friends, your school and job, your hobbies and personal interests to become a true believer willing to sacrifice all that for the good of this new group. In the extreme, cults provide a “total situation” in which members live, interact, and work, and the cult becomes the new substitute family and friendship network. Regardless of the initial reasons for joining the group, which may be laudatory, like curing world hunger or AIDS, or poverty, in actually most members become workers assigned to menial jobs to make money for the cult or become recruiters to attract new members. By cutting off all contacts with your former life, you disengage from any lifeline back “home.” Cults often instill phobias of terrible things that will happen to you and others you care about if you ever leave.

The influence process is one of indoctrination into and identification with this new group. One is expected to live a life according to the strict rules and mandates of the group, perhaps giving up sex or anything the group leaders want to control. The process is not different from the influence strategies and tactics outlined above, only it is more intense and repeated over time, building more and more complete control over all aspects of members’ lives. We know that cults seek to recruit young people who are in transition stages of their lives, school drop outs, foreign students on a visit to a new

country, those who have recently lost their jobs or their marriage or relationship is on the rocks. We should also mention that cults are big business and many are thriving and growing in numbers. You don't read much about them in the media because many have teams of expensive lawyers who bring lawsuits against one or any agency critical of their practices.

The best source of information about how to resist cult mind control tactics and break the bonds that can bind anyone to cult comes from the two books by Steven Hassan (See References). Steven was a high-ranking member of a cult for many years, and is now a counselor helping people to readjust to life after having been indoctrinated into a cult. Check out his web site:

<http://www.freedomofmind.com/resourcecenter/responsibility/mind.htm>

Reversing the Process of Good People Turning Evil: Positive Social Influence and Civic Virtue

While most psychological research is focused on the negative aspects of social influence, there is hope of applying the same basic principles toward beneficial goals. In Chapter 16 of *The Lucifer Effect*, there is an extended analysis of how principles of social influence can be used for good, to enhance basic social and political values.

Historically, social psychologists have divided positive aspects of human social behavior into prosocial behavior and altruism. Prosocial behavior benefits group members but also the individual engaging in that behavior, perhaps through higher esteem or greater acceptance by the group, or avoidance of social censure. Altruism refers specifically to positive social behavior that would be done even without personal gain.

The motivating factor that separates these types of behavior is empathy. Research shows in experiments in which people are asked to empathize with a fictional character in distress are more likely to help the person even if there were no negative consequences if they did not. Thus, if we strive to relate more with others, we may be more sensitive their situation and act in more benevolent ways.

Just as Milgram established that people can be gradually inoculated into doing more and more unthinkable tasks, the opposite technique may also be useful. We learned that the "foot-in-the-door" technique relies on agreement to a small initial request yielding to acceptance of a larger one later on. We may also utilize this principle for good by challenging ourselves to do increasingly more positive activities. Making sensible adjustments and achievable objectives can help us reach goals that improve on our lives and those near us.

Establishing prosocial behavior and promoting civic virtue highlights the potential positive aspects of social influence. Moral behavior can be cultivated in early life by rewarding positive behavior. Government, education, and social institutions can be re-designed to facilitate critical thinking and responsible conduct. The following highlights some ideas that we can bring into our own lives and those of our children.

1. Teaching children to disobey *unjust* authority
 - Support critical thinking abilities in children – asking for support of assertions, separation of rhetoric and conclusion, developing means vs. ends thinking
2. Rewarding social modeling of moral behavior
 - Social recognition for good deeds; acknowledging the bravery of whistleblowers of misconduct
3. Promoting critical thinking that challenges false ideologies and bad means to good ends
 - Not living on mindless “auto-pilot”
 - Reflect on details of the immediate situation; think before acting
4. Encouraging respect for human diversity and appreciating human variability
 - Reduces in-group biases and discrimination
5. Not allowing stereotyping and dehumanization of other people
6. Changing social conditions that make people feel anonymous
 - Support conditions that make people feel special, have sense of personal value and self-worth
7. Encouraging admission of mistakes, accepting error in judgments – to reduce justification for continuing wrong, immoral behavior
 - Reduces need to justify mistakes and to continue wrong or immoral action
 - Undercuts motivation to reduce dissonance by being consistent with a bad decision
8. Promoting personal responsibility and accountability of one’s actions
 - Diffused responsibility is a mere disguise for own role in consequences of actions
9. Supporting independence over group conformity
 - Increasing awareness of when conformity to the group norm is counter-productive and should not be followed
 - Understanding when independence should take precedence despite possible social rejection
10. Reducing poverty, inequities, and entitlements of the privileged
11. Never sacrificing freedom for promised security
 - Bad deal – sacrificing the real and immediate for the distant and elusive; lose control and relinquish power to the already powerful
12. Discouraging even the smallest of transgressions, cheating, gossiping, lying, teasing, bullying
 - Provides first steps toward more severe behaviors
 - Can harness the subtle power of small steps in Milgram’s paradigm to promote positive actions and altruism until one’s does uncharacteristically or previously imaginably good deeds.

Dr. Z’s 20 Hints About Resisting Unwanted Influences On You

(Here is a set of general advice that I typically offer to students at the end of my courses at Stanford University, whether the course is Introduction to Psychology, Mind Control, or Exploring Human Nature. They cut across the different varieties of influence and are really generic recommendations of how to become more influence savvy.)

1. Do not maintain an illusion of “personal invulnerability” – If it can happen to them, then it can happen to you too.
2. Be modest in self-estimates – it is better to perceive yourself as vulnerable and take necessary precautions than to go “where angels fear to tread.”
3. Engage in life as fully as possible, yet be mindful and aware, attuned to the moment, and prepared to disengage and think critically when necessary – people are generally good and trustworthy, but others make their careers as “influence professionals” who try to get you to do what they want.
4. Be aware of Cialdini’s contexts and principles of compliance; when you sense you are operating on one of the principles, look to the relevant context being manipulated on you and pull back; where the context is obvious, expect the principle to be activated.
5. Be ready to say the three most difficult phrases in the world: “*I was wrong*”, “*I made a mistake*”, and “*I’ve changed my mind.*” Cut bait, accept immediate loss of money, face, etc. that could lead to bigger long term losses – Dissonance and consistency then go limp in the face of such self-honesty.
6. Separate your ego from your actions; maintain a sense of positive self-esteem, that is independent from the occasional failure and your stupid actions at times (Laugh at yourself once a day. This is especially true for shy folks.)
7. Separate messenger from message in your mind, process each systematically not heuristically, be aware of being tired, a “cognitive miser,” wanting simple short cuts, giving in to non-verbal tricks. There are no free lunches and no quick and dirty paths to anything worthwhile – sloth and greed breed gullibility.
8. Insist on a second opinion, a delay in signing contract while thinking about it away from the situation; never immediately sign on the dotted line.
9. Develop ‘*Discrepancy Detectors*,’ alerting mental and intuition systems that stem from vague feelings of something wrong, something in the situation or the story you are being handed that does not fit to analysis to counteraction -> dissent -> disobedience.
10. Try playing devil’s advocate, be the deviant, to assess the reactions against you and that position, when the influence agent says he/she is only doing X for your good.
11. Avoid ‘*Total Situations*’ where you lose contact with your social support and informational networks (cults and the most powerful forces of social influence thrive there), you do not want all your reinforcers to come from these new sources.
12. In all authority confrontations: be polite, individuate yourself and the other, make it clear it is not “your problem” in the process, or situation; describe the problem objectively, do not get emotional, state clearly the remedy sought, and the positive consequences expected – hold off on the threats and costs to them or their agency as last resort.
13. When in some situation of authority encounter, you are being challenged – ask for identification, demand to see it, get person’s name (write it down) and all details about the encounter.
14. Never allow yourself to be cut off emotionally from your familiar and trusted reference groups of family, friends, neighbors, co-workers – do not accept putdowns against them.
15. Remember all ideologies are just words, abstractions used for particular political, social, economic purposes; be wary taking actions proposed as necessary to

on. Doing so openly reduces the need to justify or rationalize our mistakes, and thereby to continue to give support to bad or immoral actions. Confession of error undercuts the motivation to reduce cognitive dissonance; dissonance evaporates when a reality check occurs. "Cutting the bait" instead of resolutely "staying the course" when it is wrong has immediate cost, but it always results in long-term gain. Consider how many years the Vietnam War continued long after top military and administration officials, like Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, knew that the war was wrong and could not be won. How many thousands of lives were lost to such wrong-headed resistance, when acknowledging failure and error could have saved them. How much good could come to all of us were our political leaders able to admit their similar errors in Iraq? It is more than a political decision to "save face" by denying errors instead saving soldiers' and civilian lives—it is a moral imperative.

"I am mindful."

In many settings smart people do dumb things because they fail to attend to key features in the words or actions of influence agents and fail to notice obvious situational clues. Too often we function on automatic pilot, using outworn scripts that have worked for us in the past, never stopping to evaluate whether they are appropriate in the here and now. Following the advice of Harvard researcher, Ellen Langer, we must transform our usual state of mindless inattention into "mindfulness," especially in new situations. Don't hesitate to fire a wake-up shot to your cortex; even when in familiar situations old habits continue to rule even though they have become obsolete or wrong. We need to be reminded not to live our lives on automatic pilot, but always to take a Zen moment to reflect on the meaning of the immediate situation, to think before acting. Never go mindlessly into situations where angels and sensible people fear to tread. For the best result add "critical thinking" to mindfulness in your resistance. Ask for evidence to support assertions; demand that ideologies be sufficiently elaborated to allow you to separate rhetoric from substance. Try to determine whether the recommended means ever justify potentially harmful ends. Imagine end game scenarios of the future consequences any current practice. Reject simple solutions as quick fixes for complex personal or social problems. Support critical thinking from the earliest times in a child's life, alerting them to deceptive ads, biased claims, and distorted perspectives being presented to them. Help them become wiser and warier knowledge consumers.

"I am responsible."

Taking responsibility for one's decisions and actions puts the actor in the driver's seat, for better or for worse. Allowing others to compromise their own responsibility, to diffuse it, makes them powerful back-seat drivers, and makes the car move recklessly ahead without a responsible driver. We become more resistant to undesirable social influence by always maintaining a sense of personal responsibility and by being willing to be held accountable for our actions. Obedience to authority is less blind to the extent that we are aware that diffusion of responsibility merely disguises our individual complicity in the conduct of questionable actions. Your conformity to anti-social group norms is undercut to the extent that you do not allow displacement of responsibility, when you refuse to spread responsibility around the gang, the frat, the shop, the battalion, or the corporation. Always imagine a future time when today's deed will be on trial and no one will accept your pleas of only following orders, or everyone else was doing it.

“I am Me, the best I can be.”

Do not allow others to deindividuate you, to put you into a category, in a box, a slot, to turn you into an object. Assert your individuality; politely state your name and your credentials, loud and clear. Insist on the same behavior in others. Make eye contact (remove all eye-concealing sun glasses), and offer information about yourself that reinforces your unique identity. Find common ground with dominant others in influence situations and use it to enhance similarities. Anonymity and secrecy conceals wrongdoing and undermines the human connection. It can become the breeding ground that generates dehumanization, and, as we now know, dehumanization provides the killing ground for bullies, rapists, torturers, terrorists, and tyrants. Go a step beyond self-individuation. Work to change whatever social conditions make people feel anonymous. Instead, support practices that make others feel special, so that they too have a sense of personal value and self worth. Never allow or practice negative stereotyping—words and labels can be destructive.

“I respect Just Authority, but Rebel against Unjust Authority.”

In every situation, work to distinguish between those in authority who, because of their expertise, wisdom, seniority, or special status, deserve respect, and those unjust authority figures who demand our obedience without having any substance. Many who assume the mantle of authority are pseudo-leaders, false prophets, confidence men and women, self-promoters, who should not be respected, but rather disobeyed and openly exposed to critical evaluation. Parents, teachers, and religious leaders should play more active roles in teaching children this critical differentiation. They should be polite and courteous when such a stance is justified, yet be good, wise children by resisting those authorities that do not deserve their respect. Doing so, will reduce mindless obedience to self-proclaimed authorities whose priorities are not in our best interests.

“I want group acceptance, but value my independence.”

The lure of acceptance into a desired social group is more powerful than that of the mythical golden ring in “Lord of the Rings.” The power of that desire for acceptance will make some people do almost anything to be accepted, and go to even further extremes to avoid rejection by The Group. We are indeed social animals, and usually our social connections benefit us and help us to achieve important goals that we could not achieve alone. However, there are times when conformity to a group norm is counter-productive to the social good. It is imperative to determine when to follow the norm and when to reject it. Ultimately, we live within our own minds, in solitary splendor, and therefore we must be willing and ready to declare our independence regardless of the social rejection it may elicit. It is not easy, especially for young people with shaky self-images, or adults whose self-image is isomorphic with that of their job. Pressures on them to be a “team player,” to sacrifice personal morality for the good of the team are nearly irresistible. What is required is that we step back, get outside opinions, and find new groups that will support our independence and promote our values. There will always be another, different, better group for us.

“I will be more Frame Vigilant.”

Who makes the frame becomes the artist, or the con artist. The way issues are framed is often more influential than the persuasive arguments within their boundaries. Moreover, effective frames can seem not to be frames at all, just sound bites, visual images, slogans, and logos. They influence us without our being conscious of them, and

they shape our orientation toward the ideas or issues they promote. For example, voters, who favored reducing estate tax benefits for the rich, were urged to vote against a “death tax”; the tax was exactly the same, but its defining term was different. We desire things that are framed as being “scarce,” even when they are plentiful. We are averse to things that are framed as potential losses, and prefer what is presented to us as a gain, even when the ratio of positive to negative prognoses is the same. We don’t want a 40% chance of losing X over Y, but do want the 60% chance of gaining Y over X. Linguist George Lakoff clearly shows in his writings that it is crucial to be aware of frame power and to be vigilant to offset its insidious influence on our emotions, thoughts, and votes.

“I will balance my Time Perspective.”

We can be led to do things that are not really what we believe in our value when we allow ourselves to become trapped in an expanded present moment. When we stop relying on our sense of past commitments and our sense of future liabilities, we open ourselves to situational temptations to engage in “Lord of the Flies” excesses. By not going “with the flow” when others around you are being abusive or out of control, you are relying a temporal perspective that stretches beyond present-oriented hedonism or present-fatalism. You are likely to engage in a cost/benefit analysis of actions in terms of their future consequences. Or, you may resist by being sufficiently conscious of a past time frame that contains your personal values and standards. By developing a balanced time perspective in which past, present and future can be called into action depending on the situation and task at hand, you are in a better position to act responsibly and wisely than when your time perspective is biased toward reliance on only one or two time frames. Situational power is weakened when past and future combine to contain the excesses of the present. For example, research indicates that righteous Gentiles who helped to hide Dutch Jews from the Nazis did not engage in the kind of rationalizing as their neighbors did in generating reasons for not helping. These heroes depended upon moral structures derived from their past and never lost sight of a future time when they would look back on this terrible situation and be forced to ask themselves whether they had done the right thing when they chose not to succumb to fear and social pressure.

“I will not sacrifice personal or civic freedoms for the illusion of security.”

The need for security is a powerful determinant of human behavior. We can be manipulated into engaging in actions that are alien to us when faced with alleged threats to our security or the promise of security from danger. More often than not, influence peddlers gain power over us by offering the Faustian contract: You will be safe from harm if you will just surrender some of your freedom, either personal or civic, to that authority. The Mephistophelean tempter will argue that his power to save you depends upon the people making small sacrifices of this or this little right or that small freedom. Reject that deal. Never sacrifice basic personal freedoms for the promise of security because the sacrifices are real and immediate and the security is a distant illusion. This is as true in traditional marital arrangements as it is in the commitment of good citizens to the interests of their nation when its leader promises safety at the cost of a collective sacrifice of suspending laws, privacy, and freedoms. Erich Fromm’s classic “Escape from Freedom” reminded us that this is the first step a fascist leader takes even in a nominally democratic society.

“I can oppose unjust Systems.”

Individuals falter in the face of the intensity of the systems we have described:

the military and prison systems as well as those of gangs, cults, fraternities, corporations, and even dysfunctional families. But individual resistance in concert with that of others of the same mind and resolve can combine to make a difference. The next section in this chapter will portray individuals who changed systems by being willing to take the risk of blowing the whistle on corruption within them, or constructively working to change them. Resistance may involve physically removing one's self from a "total situation" in which all information and reward/ punishments are controlled. It may involve challenging the "groupthink" mentality, and being able to document all allegations of wrongdoing. It may involve getting help from other authorities, counselors, investigative reporters, or revolutionary compatriots. Systems have enormous power to resist change and withstand even righteous assault. Here is one place where individual acts of heroism to challenge unjust systems, and their bad barrel makers, are best taken by soliciting others to join one's cause. The system can redefine individual opposition as delusional, a pair of opponents as sharing folie · deux, but with three on your side, you become a force of ideas to be reckoned with. This 10-step program is really only a starter kit toward building resistance and resilience against undesirable influences and illegitimate attempts at persuasion. It takes your awareness and sensitivity to such influence settings, and a willingness to think for yourself, as you practice being independent and as autonomous as is possible.

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