



Greater Good in Education
SCIENCE-BASED PRACTICES FOR KINDER, HAPPIER SCHOOLS

PROFESSOR ZIMBARDO'S 10 STRATEGIES

[A Ten-Step Program to Build Resistance and Resilience](#)

I MADE A MISTAKE!

Let's start out by encouraging admission of our mistakes, first to ourselves then to others. Accept the dictum that to err is human. You have made an error in judgment; your decision was wrong. You had every reason to believe it was right when you made it, but now you know you were wrong. Say the six Magic words: 'I'm sorry'; 'I apologize'; 'Forgive me.' Say to yourself that you will learn from your mistakes, grow better from them.

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....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 of any current practice. Reject simple solutions as quick fixes for complex personal or social problems.

I AM RESPONSIBLE.

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....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 de-individuate you, to put you into a category, in a box, a slot, to turn you into an object....Anonymity and secrecy conceal wrongdoing and undermine 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.

I WANT GROUP ACCEPTANCE BUT VALUE MY INDEPENDENCE.

The power of the desire for acceptance will make some people do 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.

I WILL BE MORE FRAME VIGILANT.

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.

I WILL BALANCE MY TIME PERSPECTIVE.

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 on 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.

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....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.

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....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.