

When Clients Push Back

"Their resistance is not about my competence."

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Resistance can feel personal—especially when you're new. But pushback is usually a sign that something important is happening. This worksheet helps you reframe resistance, stay grounded, and respond effectively instead of reactively.

Name: _____

Date: _____

1. Reframing Resistance

Resistance isn't rejection—it's information. What might the client be telling you?

When a client pushes back, they might be:

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| ■ Testing if you're safe | ■ Protecting themselves from vulnerability |
| ■ Not ready for this particular change | ■ Feeling unheard or misunderstood |
| ■ Experiencing fear disguised as anger | ■ Reacting to past experiences with helpers |
| ■ Needing more autonomy in the process | ■ Telling you something about the pace |

2. Know Your Triggers

What types of resistance hit you hardest? Knowing this helps you stay steady.

What client behaviors make you feel defensive or frustrated?

What story do you tell yourself when a client pushes back? (e.g., 'I'm not good enough,' 'They don't want help')

What's a more balanced thought you could hold instead?

3. Staying Steady In The Moment

When you feel yourself getting activated, try these grounding strategies:

In session:

- Take a breath before responding
- Get curious instead of defensive: 'Tell me more about that'
- Reflect what you're hearing: 'It sounds like this doesn't feel right to you'
- Name it without judgment: 'I notice some hesitation—that makes sense'
- Remember: their reaction is about their experience, not your worth

After session:

- Debrief with a colleague or supervisor
- Write it out—what happened, what you felt, what you'd try next time
- Check: Did you take it personally? What would help you let it go?

4. Reflection: A Recent Example

Think about a recent moment when a client pushed back. Use this space to process it.

What happened? (Just the facts)

What did you feel in the moment?

What story did you tell yourself?

Looking back, what might the client have been communicating?

What would you try differently next time?

"Resistance isn't rejection. They're testing if you're safe. Stay steady."