



By Joe Byerly (first appeared at [We Are the Mighty](#))

Every single one of us has potential, but sometimes we suck at life.

Have you ever set a goal for yourself and an hour later talked yourself out of it? Or, tried to break a bad habit and fell back into it after uttering the words, “I can’t”? Or, quietly gave up on a passion project because you weren’t disciplined enough to see it through?

At times, we can be our own worst enemy when it comes to achieving goals. It’s hardly ever a spouse, coach or boss standing in our way; typically it’s the person we face each day in the mirror.

[Steven Pressfield](#) has named this internal force that keeps us from reaching our full potential Resistance. He writes, “The more important a call or action is to our soul’s evolution, the more resistance we will feel toward pursuing it.”

History is filled with individuals who overcame their own resistance to discover, to create, and to invent. Their examples can help us overcome our fight against resistance and achieve our goals, quit our bad habits and see our passion projects through to completion.

Hernan Cortes - Burn your ships

In 1519, Hernan Cortes led an expedition from Cuba to explore and secure the interior of Mexico for colonization. Once coming ashore, his men were divided on what to do next. Some wanted to return to Cuba; others wanted to move forward. Infighting broke out among the factions. He had to focus his men, so he destroyed his ships. Returning to Cuba was now out of the question, so they set their sights on their mission and went on to defeat the Aztecs and conquer Mexico.

Sometimes, to accomplish our goals we need to burn the ships and move out. We need to make a rash decision and force ourselves to live with the consequences. This could be done by closing a professional door, making that purchase we've been wrestling with, or signing up for the course we've been putting off.

Victor Hugo - Lock your clothes away

In late 1830, Victor Hugo had a problem. He promised his publisher a book by February, but he hadn't even started it yet. So, he had his servant lock all of his formal clothes in a trunk, leaving him with nothing but his pajamas. It worked. In January he finished his novel *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* ahead of schedule.

Hugo locked himself into what psychologists call a commitment device. This is a term used to describe the extra step we take to protect ourselves from breaking our commitment. Hugo couldn't get his clothes back *until* he finished his manuscript. Other examples include deleting social media apps from our phone so we will be less likely to pick it up every five minutes. Or setting a punishment if you fail to complete your project; this could be giving away money or doing 1000 burpees if you don't reach the milestones you've set for yourself.

Thomas Edison - Make an announcement

Thomas Edison was a great inventor. He received 1093 patents, more than any single person in U.S. history. But, he also recognized that he could procrastinate on projects. So, he would talk about how great his idea was to a journalist. In doing so, his ideas started generating publicity. Once people started talking about it, Edison had to complete it; otherwise he would be ridiculed.

When we put our pride or reputation on the line, we increase the stakes. By telling others

what we want to set out to accomplish, we are more apt to follow through with our projects. We don't want to show up empty-handed next time they ask us about it, so we increase our chances of following through with it.

Fight the resistance

The resistance is real, but it doesn't have to stop us in our tracks. We don't need to be paralyzed by inaction when it comes to goal accomplishment. Next time you feel resistance creeping up, burn the ships, lock away your clothes and tell someone about it. Don't let yourself get in the way of greatness.

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