

- *Assume value*

In order to support, we must begin by assuming that there *can* be something of value in *any* idea—even if just to stimulate us to think again, or to point up some basic flaw in what we've all been thinking.

So, to support others, allow their ideas to emerge as important and valuable, too—not easy in the light of our often competitive spirit. Assume *everyone* has *some* useful ideas, some information you don't have, a point of view you can't know, something that could contribute to the group's thinking, and *look* for it.

- *Listen carefully*

Now that you've learned how to listen, do it with a specific purpose: To hear what is useful, innovative, the *beginning* of a good idea, some new information, another point of view or analysis, etc.

Notice that I say "some," "the *beginning* of," "another." That means the whole idea doesn't have to be fully developed or totally correct. It means to look for a small piece. An addition. A departure. Look for a catalyst to stimulate further thinking, not a finished product. Catalysts are very valuable to a group, worthy of merit and notice.

- *Say it*

Having found it, *say* it.

"Listen, what you just said about X is really good," or, "I liked the part about . . . Let's talk about that some more."

This gives validity to anyone trying to come up with a new idea. It encourages others to try, too. It keeps the creative atmosphere alive. It doesn't waste kernels of good ideas by dumping the whole. It's personal effect is to flatter and affirm, making a friend and an eager participant.

- *Build on*

"You know, building on Jack's idea, we could . . ."

The next step in affirming and supporting is to continue the forward momentum. Add your own ideas. Supporting is only part of the process. Keep the energy moving by connecting that idea with your own. Find ways for synergy. Hooking into what's being said keeps positive juices flowing and people more willing to accept than reject ideas, yours included.

The results of learning and using good supporting skills are that you add to the team spirit and develop better interpersonal relations as people remember and feel grateful. You also build support for yourself and your ideas.