

Helping the Group Listen

The leader of a meeting who is alert to the signals of non-listening that I mentioned earlier and wants to fix it can actively intercede with a simple:

"Hey, this sounds like no one is listening to each other. Let's everyone make a special effort to listen till the end of a statement before jumping in." This alerts everyone to what's been happening since we're generally quite unaware that we're not listening.

Another technique could be for the leader to summarize what each person said before moving on to the next to keep the group's attention:

"So, you want us to rethink that plan because XXX, Linda. Okay. Now, Hugh, what did *you* want to say?"

Still another way is to point out when people are obviously not listening because they're being unresponsive:

"Wait a minute, Andrea. Jerry was just talking about a problem. Let's stay with that before we go on to the next issue."

Teaching your group better listening skills is important for their daily work with clients, peers, etc., not just at a meeting.

Supporting

A: "Hey, here's a good idea."

B: "Nah, we did that already."

C: "What about trying this?"

D: "It'll never work."

E: "How about doing it this way?"

F: "I'll tell you what's wrong with that . . ."

Some of us have trouble finding a positive, supportive thing to say when we hear another's idea. Yet this is one of the best ways to keep the energies flowing and to use the contributions in a group to best advantage. There are several reasons why we don't do this well:

- Because many of us are competitive at work, it's often very difficult for us to be generous to each other.
- It may feel threatening to compliment and support someone else's idea lest it make ours seem the less.