

- By nature, most of us tend to be threatened by change, so our first response to anything new is generally negative.
- When we criticize, we actually become an active part of someone else's effort rather than just being a listener.
- Cynicism often is misperceived as an achievement in itself, showing our superior knowledge and experience.

Results? We not only put a damper on new ideas and creativity but if the group norm is to be critical and negative, people become afraid to go out on a limb and even *look* for new solutions. They develop a "what's the use?" attitude and become more interested in being self-protective than innovative. If this atmosphere prevails, calling meetings to find solutions becomes a waste of time as people expect to be turned down anyway.

So—another interactive skill we need to learn in order to make group endeavors fruitful and stimulating is to support each other's new ideas. This means singling out something good, useful, innovative in someone's suggestion and then using it or incorporating it. It doesn't mean indiscriminate acceptance or a "That's nice" pat on the head. It means to listen hard, then to select what is useful and mention it.

Techniques for Supporting

- *Understand your basic approach*

Achievers may find supporting others difficult since they are so single-minded and tuned into their own goals and standards. Differing approaches and ideas may seem off-target or irrelevant to them.

Influencers may have a hard time supporting, since their object is to make a strong personal impact, not necessarily to move over and let someone else share the limelight.

Affiliators, by their nature, may have a better chance to support, since they want to be liked and accepted, to join in. People are important to them as opposed to the Achiever's interest in *standards* and the Influencer's interest in *impact*. Affiliators' problems are concern over what the group will think, fear that taking up for someone's ideas will bring group disapproval. There's also a tendency to support only those people they "like," while opposing those they don't like or feel don't like them. (We can probably all find aspects of Achiever, Affiliator, and Influencer inside ourselves.)

Here are some examples of support techniques that will help you stimulate the group process and become a more constructive participant.