

## **Acceptance**

Closely related to praise is acceptance. We all long for acceptance. We want to feel like our actions and contributions help an effort or cause. We want to be noticed by others. We all want to be someone of significance who is held in high regard. Knowing this, you can help your listeners feel that their help is appreciated, that they are personally accepted, and that their contributions are essential. When they feel accepted unconditionally, with no strings attached, their doubts, fears, and inadequacies will go out the window. Be kind, don't patronize, and be genuine in your acceptance – have it come from your heart. When that sense of belonging is established, you have tapped into a basic human need.

Have you ever watched a politician on the campaign trail? You always see it on television. Amidst the throngs of people, the candidate strives to shake hands and look into the eyes of as many individual people as possible. He wants his supporters to feel that their individual efforts contribute to the cause, that without their help, the cause would be lost. This personal touch boosts morale so that everyone wants to help out and will not rest until the candidate who reached out and shook their hand secures the victory.

Never criticize someone you want to persuade or influence. It damages your relationship and destroys the connection you have with him or her. Instead, use praise and appreciation to increase acceptance and self-confidence. Many times an overly zealous boss destroys any possibility for loyalty and genuine compliance by telling their subordinates why his ideas are stupid and will never work. Little does he know that these belittling comments will only make his staff cling to their own ideas and resent his even more.

One way to make people feel accepted is to offer genuine thanks. Seek to make a conscientious and deliberate effort to thank people. Don't assume they know we care and appreciate them. Don't make the mistake of thinking that a paycheck is thanks enough. One of the main reasons people are dissatisfied with their jobs is because they are never thanked or given any recognition for their efforts. It might seem unnatural to use thanks and gratitude, since most people were not raised in an environment where doing so was commonplace, but it's worth the effort to learn how to dole out thanks effectively.

Often individuals increase their feelings of acceptance by building their association with certain people, places, or things. This has been referred to as Social Identity Theory. For example, a sports fan may increase his self-esteem by plastering his walls with a certain team's sports paraphernalia. Even though no one on the team has any clue who this Joe Schmoe is, he feels better about himself anyway, just because of the association and identity he has created for himself with the team. Thinking back, why was it such a life or death situation in to belong to social groups in high school? A sense of belonging is even more important to us as adults. Who you know and what you have is in direct correlation to your self-esteem and acceptance.