

## **How You Can Tell If You're Really Connecting**

I've talked about common rapport-building obstacles and how you can know for sure that you're *not* connecting. But how do you know that you *are* connecting, especially when your audience is not going to tell you? One of the most obvious signs of a good connection is that the initial defensiveness and skepticism begin to dissipate. The mood relaxes and your audience begins to relax. They begin to voluntarily offer personal thoughts and feelings without you having to pull it out of them. Openness increases, and resistance decreases. There is more eye contact and more open body language. It could best be summed up by saying things start to "feel right." The exchange is natural, sincere, positive, and upbeat. You could compare it to how you feel when talking to a good friend.

One of the myths about having rapport with people is that you have to agree with each other on every point. Rapport and agreement are not the same. When you have good rapport you will no doubt agree on many things, but this is incidental and not essential. Your ability to connect with people cannot be conditional. To be a powerful persuader, your persuasiveness cannot have any contingencies. You must be persuasive no matter who comes to your table, and that means accepting people as they are and still respecting them, listening to them, and caring about them. Some may think I go too far in saying agreement is incidental. Is it possible to have rapport with someone with whom you agree on nothing? Think of your friends and family. You can probably think of someone you like and connect with very well even though you don't agree on financial, political, or religious matters.