

# Giving Validation

Alan Loy McGinnis (1933 – 2005) was a best-selling author, family therapist, business consultant and popular speaker. After a 20-year career as a minister, he became a counselor and co-founded the Valley Counseling Center in Glendale, Calif. He authored several books, including *The Friendship Factor*, *Bringing Out the Best in People*, *Confidence*, and *The Balanced Life*.

He cited an interesting study about the power of positive encouragement. He told of a second-grade teacher who complained that her children were spending too much time standing up and roaming around the room rather than working.

Two psychologists spent several days at the back of the room with stop-watches observing the behavior of the children and the teacher. Every 10 seconds, they noted how many children were out of their seats. They counted 360 unseated children throughout each 20-minute period. They also noted that the teacher said, “Sit down!” seven times during the same period.



The psychologists tried an experiment. They asked the teacher to tell the children to sit down more often. Then they sat back to see what would happen. This time, they noted that she commanded her students to sit down 27.5 times in an average 20-minute period, and now 540 were noted to be out of their seats during the same average period. Her increased scolding actually made the problem worse. Interestingly, when she later backed off to her normal number of reprimands, the roaming also

declined to the exact number recorded previously in just two days.

Then the experimenters tried a different tack. They asked the teacher to refrain from commanding the children to sit down altogether, and to instead quietly compliment those children who were seated and working. The result? Children’s roaming decreased by 33 percent. They exhibited their best behavior when they were complimented more and reprimanded less.

There is immense power in affirming others. Leaders who get results know this. People who draw others to themselves and who motivate others to great action are almost always those who encourage more than criticize, who compliment more and reprimand less.

– Beecher Hunter