



## Be Glad for Fans ..... and Critics

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It's great to have friends and fans. Friends and fans make life enjoyable. They provide companionship. They give support and encouragement. They make you feel good about who you are and what you do. But no matter how likable you are, not everyone who knows you is a friend or fan. You eventually encounter a neighbor who doesn't like being your neighbor. You have conflict with a coworker. A customer or supplier complains about you. A family member disapproves of you. At some point you believe in something, say something, or do something that offends people. As a result, you have detractors and critics as well as friends and fans.

The more you take a position and express your opinion, the more you will repel (and attract) people. No matter how good or right you are, you'll have critics. Preachers who preach a rousing sermon to thousands of church members still receive emails the next day from people who thought the sermon was blasphemous. Unselfish community leaders with lots of public support still experience protesters. Great leaders, speakers, teachers, and sports figures who enjoy high levels of support still have cynics and scoffers.

Criticism reflects the reality that people have opinions, which are often based on very different core beliefs and values. When you stand for something, there will be others who take an opposing position. No matter how you think or behave, there will be others who think and behave differently. No matter how right you may be, or think you may be, there will be others who think you are wrong. Having critics simply means that you have different opinions and values. It doesn't mean you are inferior.

When you make your thoughts known, expect to have both admirers and critics. Expect people with similar values and beliefs to become your fans. Expect those with different values and beliefs to criticize you. Expect there to always be people who oppose you if not dislike you.

The goal then is not to try to make everyone a friend or fan. Of course making friends is a worthwhile pursuit and being likable is a good quality, but you can't expect everyone to like you and your ideas. So when people criticize you, be mentally tough enough that people don't damage your core self-esteem. Also know when to listen. Don't completely turn off others' disparagements, criticisms, and objections because you might be missing valuable opportunities to learn and grow. There are times when people's critical remarks are worth listening to. The desired capability therefore is being able to disregard the hecklers, but being open to those worth listening to and influencing.

To know who to listen to, recognize those who have dishonorable or competing motives. Know who wants to see you fail. Recognize those who have conflicting objectives, a jealous nature, opposing beliefs and values, or significantly different personalities. They are not going to be your fans. Don't waste your time and energy trying to win them over. Politely ignore them.

For those whom you respect and are worth listening to or influencing, give them your attention. Seek to understand them and their concerns. Help them understand your perspective. Learn what you can from them. Influence them to the extent that is possible. If they become a fan, great - enjoy their acquaintance. If they don't, turn your attention elsewhere. Feel good knowing that you tried.

There is a fine line between knowing who and who not to listen to. Don't waste your time on the hecklers or those with competing motives. They are your critics, not your fans. Know that you will always have them. Be glad for them because if they weren't your critics, they might be your fans and that would mean that you think and act just like them!

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