



# American Inspiration

Greetings everyone!

Well, contest season has flown by and I cannot believe that nationals is this weekend. We have almost 500 solos and 600 team and officer events including college teams, high school teams, Japan, South Africa, Alaska, and many more. Our schedule is already posted online so make sure to see if your favorite team is competing. Also, directors watch for our summer camp brochure that was mailed today. If you would like to have a PDF copy e-mailed to you, just reply to this e-mail to request the summer camp brochure.

Here are some thoughts for today and every day:



**“Seize from every moment its unique novelty, and do not prepare your joys.”  
Andre Gide**



**“You will be happier if you will give people a bit of your heart rather than a piece of your mind.” author unknown**



**“There are no great people in this world, only great challenges which ordinary people rise to meet.” William Frederick Halsey, Jr (1852-1959)  
military officer**



**“We judge ourselves by what we feel capable of doing, while others judge us by what we have already done.” Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882)  
poet**



I want to personally thank each of you for allowing me to deliver this weekly message to you. The message is sent to over 4,000 educators, students, business friends, and family friends. I seek to find information that will inspire not only others, but to seek personal motivation as well. I hope that you enjoy being a part of this message that is delivered by e-mail every Wednesday, except during the summer months, when we are on the road for camps.

Many of us, as educators and leaders, must learn to offer constructive criticism to constantly strive to reach higher goals and seek improvement. I came across a passage on offering constructive criticism that I modified a bit for dance/drill teams. However, it is something that can apply to any group or business. I hope

you find some helpful lines that will encourage you to offer positive re-enforcement to your delivery of criticism.

Have a wonderful week, and, as always, please *keep in touch*.

--

*Sincerely,*

*Joyce E. Pennington, Pres. CEO*

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## How to Criticize

by Merrill Douglass

Reprinted from Christian Management Report and Positive Living

Customized for drill teams by Joyce Pennington

Few of us look forward to telling people they've done something wrong. It's easy for the conversation to go astray, even with the best intentions. The other person may be overly sensitive or defensive. Often, the only results are ill-will and an upset stomach. No wonder some of us procrastinate criticizing others.

Yet, we can't avoid it. Criticism is necessary for growth. Without correction, there is little improvement. The trick is to criticize in a positive manners so you actually help the other person grow and improve. Here are ten guidelines that can help you do that successfully:

1. Focus your criticism on the behavior. Don't say, "You behaved like an idiot." Instead, say, "Your rudeness upset her." Good people make mistakes. Simply because they have goofed doesn't make them bad people.
2. Be specific. Generalized comments rarely help. Don't say, "Everyone needs to point their toes." Instead say, "Jessica, please watch your toe points."
3. Only criticize something they can change. Otherwise, you risk making them feel guilty and self conscious over something beyond their control.
4. Offer to help work out solutions. What's done is done. Concentrate on how to solve the problem. There's no point in blaming the person; she probably feels bad enough already.
5. Explain the reason for your criticism. Be sure you're really trying to help the other person, not just boost your own ego.

6. Get right to the point, and keep it short. This is not the time for lectures, or belaboring a point.
7. Avoid anger or sarcasm. The intent is to help people improve their performance, not to punish or belittle them.
8. Be considerate of the other person's feelings. Show empathy, understanding and compassion. Pick the right time and place.
9. Criticize in private. Stick to verbal comments. If you must write it, edit your words carefully.
10. Reaffirm your support. Let people know they are important. Express your confidence in them.