

# Approval/Disapproval

*From Theatre Games for the Classroom by Viola Spolin*

We are after direct experience in these workshops.

As leaders and teacher, we should realize that none of us is entirely free from the need to give and receive approval and disapproval. However, having to look to others to tell us where we are, who we are, and what is happening results in a serious loss of personal experiencing. Trying to save ourselves from attack (disapproval) we build a might fortress and are timid, or we fight each time we venture forth. Some, in striving for approval, develop egocentricity and exhibitionism; some give up and simply go along. Trying to be “good” or avoiding “being bad” because one can’t be “good” can develop into a way of life those needing approval/disapproval from authority. And the investigation and solving of problems becomes of secondary importance. Passivity is a response to authoritarianism, a giving up of personal responsibility. Playing in workshops should help those who are passive to trust themselves and others to make decisions, to take initiatives, even risks, and to seek freedom.

During theater-game workshops, try to be aware of the effects of approval/disapproval on yourself and your students. When evaluation questions are based on whether the problem (focus) was solved or not and no player is ridiculed, put down, or coyly manipulated, trust in fellow players grows. A peer group is formed and all are freed to take responsibility for their part of playing the game.