



Judging – Understanding the Problem

Many of us walk into a new group or classroom and right away start to compare ourselves to others in our heads. If we think most people are not as good as we are, then we feel disappointed with the group. We don't want someone to mistake us for being losers like them. On the other hand, if we think most of them are better than we are - smarter, richer, better looking - then we might feel embarrassed or ashamed of who we are. Comparing ourselves to others is a no-win situation, but it's so common. Comparing can become a serious problem and it can get in the way of learning.

For so many of us the talk inside our head never stops - even though it makes us feel bad about ourselves. We put ourselves down so much with negative messages. This can also be why we sometimes act like we are better than others. After hours and hours of putting ourselves down, when we get the opportunity to put someone else down, we speak unkindly before we think. But it's a vicious cycle. Usually we regret it when we were mean or rude.

All this comparing saps our energy. We could use this energy to build ourselves up and to support others who are in similar situations to us. Thinking so much about ourselves and how we measure up, or thinking so much about others and what they're doing or thinking, takes away our focus from what we need to do for ourselves. It is possible to try to calm our anxious energy and put it into being kind to ourselves and taking steps toward what we want to accomplish. Some of these resources will help you do that.

Why do we get so 'hooked' by some people?

Sometimes, when we don't like a person or the things they do, we're able to just ignore it, or them: we shrug and say, "Oh well, that's not someone I'm going to choose as a friend", or, "Oh well, that's just how Harry is. Silly old Harry."

Other times though, the things people do, or how we feel around them in general, makes us bristle or even go TOTALLY WILD! We may feel intense anger, horrible frustration, or even really frightened around certain people. We CAN'T STAND THEM!

It is interesting to think about the difference - why we have such a strong reaction to some negative things, and not to others.

Here's a question: when you are going to meet someone for a coffee, how many minutes late can they be before you think of them as 'late'. Is 2 minutes late, 'late'? How many minutes late can they be before you would say something to them about it? How many before you get angry? How many before you leave, figuring that they are not coming at all? Are your judgments different with different people?

Everyone has different answers. But one thing is for sure: all answers are related to how late you let yourself be. Of course, some people might be harder on themselves than they are on others, some might go easier on themselves... but what we let ourselves do or feel, or think, or believe is always connected to what we let others do, feel, think, or believe.

It is hard to be with someone who reminds us of things we reject in ourselves, or just reminds us of bad past experiences. One word for all this is 'triggering'. It's like we have hidden landmines in our personalities, and sometimes someone steps on one of them, triggering the explosion!

When these very strong feelings are triggered, one way of thinking about it is that 20% of it has to do with the real, current situation, and 80% is connected to experiences in our past. This does NOT mean that our reaction isn't 'real', but it's useful to try to get a handle on what is old, and what is new. If we can figure out what we're reacting to in our past, sometimes the problem in the present doesn't look so huge. Sometimes we can let go of some of the harsh judgments and strong feelings, and see the present more clearly.