

Questions



Do you remember when you were little and you drove your parents crazy with all the questions you asked? At what point in your life did you stop asking questions and started knowing all the answers? At what point did you repress curiosity and decide to accept the authority of others – teachers, parents, religious authorities - instead of staying on your own quest for truth? When did you decide that you know nothing and other people know everything? Then decide that when you know what they know you know everything too. It is at this point that we stop learning anything valuable about our lives or ourselves.

All around me I hear quick judgments, quick diagnoses of a “problem”, people labeling themselves and others with general and sweeping put downs..... “I was so stupid,” “He is such an ass...” “That person is a racist, another person is a bleeding heart liberal...” and so it goes on and on...With these quick judgments and diagnoses come quick solutions.... “You have a certain number of symptoms of what we have decided to label ADHD and so here is a drug that will fix you... after a 10 minute consultation in a doctors office.

Judgment stops enquiry and can never lead to deep understanding or compassion and so judgment absolves us of all responsibility to be loving towards others or ourselves. When we judge we do not have to do the hard inner work of questioning the reasons behind behavior, the history of suffering, the human need that underlies any behavior, the pain, fear and shame out of which people act the way they do. We feel anxiety about really seeing our inner fears and pain and we feel anxiety really being present to the suffering of another. Judgment serves to stop the anxiety by searching instead for an external solution. It is self-serving and self-protective.

I can avoid anxiety by giving myself a mental slap of shame and decide to act differently. Of course, nothing changes with this attitude. The self-shaming just adds to the psychic pool of shame and suffering. And it adds to the world’s suffering too when we project our judgments outward. Judgment is the same as hatred and rejection – the very opposite of Love. Judgment keeps us on the surface of life, rather than asking the hard questions. Judgment seeks to blame rather than understand: to reject rather than to have compassion: to fix and control rather than to connect deeply. Self-judgment keeps us in a superior one up position to a part of ourselves that I deem inferior and one down and so intrapsychically we live a split life at war with ourselves. Other judgment keeps us in a superior one up position to others and leads to external wars and conflict.

When we think we KNOW something we have stopped learning, we have stopped the journey of growth, openness,... spaciousness. Now we are closed, and rigid. It is here that we stagnate and start rotting – and it smells badly.

We turn a corner in our lives when we return to the place of a young child who questions everything, with eagerness, with wide-awake curiosity about everything. This is the point at which we truly start the Hero/ine’s journey as Joseph Campbell has called it. It takes courage, a lion’s heart and commitment to the journey to reach the place of Love and Truth within our own being.

Stopping our judgments does not mean that we lose our capacity for discernment – it means that we understand more deeply, with greater compassion.

May you be blessed with a wellspring of endless questions, and may your reach the day of the Last Judgment within yourself.

“ Always the beautiful answer. Who asks a more beautiful question?”

e.e. cummings