

Judgment/Discernment

Judgment is a necessary condition of survival. We must be able to discern difference between, for instance, safe and unsafe in order to choose safety. Without the capacity for judgment, we would have no capacity for choice other than instinctual, physiological fight or flight. Judgment is the function of dualistic thinking of the left brain. A very large proportion of our thinking every day is judgment. Red light or green light? Stop and think for a moment how much you rely on this function. It is the basis of the law and civilized behavior. It informs our values, beliefs and ideals. It informs how we want to live our lives and is the incentive for growth and forward movement.

The dictionary defines judgment as:

“the ability to judge, make a decision, or form an opinion objectively, authoritatively, and wisely, especially in matters affecting action; good sense; discretion: *a man of judgment.*”

Judgment also helps us discern motive and consequence. When we use this faculty, to not only assess a behavior, but also to see deeply into motive and consequence, it gives rise to compassion. Understanding and insight are not possible without judgment. Judgment and mercy go hand in hand. Discerning motive brings to awareness the pain and fear underlying choices we make in life. Understanding the natural consequences of choices made, brings more compassion.

Judgment with mercy always seeks a win/win solution for all concerned. What would bring wholeness to both the victim and perpetrator? How can one creatively protect and set limits without being punitive and rejecting? How can we rehabilitate instead of punish and condemn? This is an intra-psychic dynamic as well and an interpersonal dynamic of seeking to set limits in love rooted in the capacity to judge or discern.

Judgmentalism

Being judgmental is to decide to be a perpetrator against others. Judgmentalism is about having an attitude of rejection, anger, and unkindness towards another. Inherent in this attitude is an attitude of superiority and self-righteousness that denies the tendency and capacity for that same behavior in ourselves. An attitude of judgmentalism assumes that one has the right to correct, change, control, give advice to, punish or be vengeful towards another. Judgmentalism is personal and emotion laden, not objective. It results in the person being judged as bad or worthless because of a mistake, behavior or characteristic. It results in the other feeling shame and worthlessness. There is no separation between the person and the behavior. There is no empathy, understanding, or care for the other or recognition of one's own fallibility.

Judgmentalism towards self

This may be a conscious or unconscious process of berating, punishing, and abusing ourselves for behavior we judge to be wrong or bad. It results in shame which is a threat to our identity as good people. It hinders change. It can also be a manipulative way to avoid taking responsibility. By shaming ourselves we preempt the possibility of another confronting our behavior.

Projection

Judgmentalism is what psychologists call the unconscious defense of projection. The shadow, dark side of our own nature: impulses, conflicts, feelings and thoughts we are unaware of, which may result in behavior that is unacceptable to us and would cause us to feel shame, is seen and punished in the other. Judgmentalism is

therefore a valuable behavior to notice in ourselves because it gives us clues about some unclaimed and split off part of ourselves that needs to be owned and accepted with compassion and wisdom.