

JUDGEMENT

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Thomas R. Cuba

Not long ago, I was having a conversation with a friend and the topic of behaviour came up. There are people in our circle who have, well, to be polite, I'll call them oddities. Some are quite rude, and several are downright offensive. When I used those two adjectives, my friend gently advised me that one of the main things she has tried to do is to not judge people. They are who they are. Nothing is going to change them. And, furthermore, we should not put ourselves in the position of asking other people to live up to our standards of conduct.

Now, I'm not referring to criminal conduct, like bribery, robbery, or assault. The standards we were talking about were more along the lines of how a third person enters a two-party conversation. In our circle, it is quite common for a person to walk up to the two people who are conversing and simply start talking. There is no waiting for acknowledgement or a break in the conversation. The primary method is the blunt interruption, and without a 'pardon me' or 'excuse me.' Among all the behaviours, I find this one the most irritating.

But my friend held to her belief that the person was not to be judged.

I reflected on this for several weeks and finally had to accept the fact that, on the level of behaviour that we had been discussing, judgement should be avoided.

However, I have my own behavioural quirks. One of them is overthinking, or at least that's what other people call it. As a scientist, among other careers, I refer to it as being thorough.

Logically, if judgement is off the table, how does one know what to expect in life? My scientific bent provided the question, and, in short order, it provided the answer. All I needed was a different word: Assessment. By practicing non-judgemental assessment of a person or a situation, I can know what to expect. A great side-benefit is that my level of irritation plummeted.