

## PHILOSOPHY:



# (to) JUDGE v.

OED: To form an opinion or conclusion



"Nice job!"

"That's a great haircut."

"You're amazing!"

We love to hear comments like this, and all of these statements are judgments.

One of the funny things about the word 'judge' is that it is almost always judged unfairly. One look through internet search pages – using a wide variety of search words – provided fewer than 5% of the results to the word 'judge' in a positive light (and then only when I used 'good' in the search; most of *those* results were from law firms and business websites!).

Judging well, so that we make good decisions, is one of the most valuable and important functions our brains can perform. But where can we learn to discern?

When we judge, we designate value. We determine if a thing is 'good' or 'bad', 'heavy' or 'light', 'beautiful' or 'ugly', etc. Judgements are relative to a belief system. To improve our ability to judge, we must expand our experience, and also our knowledge of ourselves and humanity.

We must judge when food is too hot to give to a child. We must judge if we have enough fuel to reach our destination. We judge our culpability in an unfortunate event. (Often generously. Flip this page to find out about the *Fundamental Attribution Error*)

Like many popular words and phrases, the word 'judge' is often referred to negatively, and is based on a fear or a projection of our own beliefs.

By reflecting on the word, we can open our minds and hearts to it's full potential, confront and de-escalate uncomfortable situations, and enlarge our feelings of humanity. We can understand that values, and the judgements that are made because of them, are personal; and that the judgments of others are no threat to our own.

Through understanding, we can own our judgments, and offer generosity when we hope that others, too, will judge us kindly.

Job interviews are all about judgments; an applicant must gather enough information to determine if the job that is available is one that will be satisfying, while the employer must also judge if the applicant will be a good match for the job and the team.

We must judge for safety. We must judge for nutrition content, carcinogenic (cancer-causing) content, and alcohol content. We must learn to say 'no'...which is a judgment about our limitations. We can be understanding and forgiving, which may be what we will want from others, too.

We can decide how we wish to judge, and see an opportunity to educate others when we know we are being judged. We have a lot of power!

Things we judge: FAIR \* GOOD \* BEST \* SAFE \* ENOUGH \* IMPORTANT \* VALUE \* RIGHT

## BELIEFS, MORALITY, VALUES AND JUDGMENT

They determine our choices and, hence, our possibilities!

*"Judge so that you can make the best decisions for yourself; some choices are better than others."*

- Sheila Baranoski

*"We do not see things as they are, we see them as we are."*

- Anonymous

*"Good judgment comes from experience, and experience comes from bad judgment."* - Anonymous

Examples of judging in action:

**Decide:** Should I articulate my boundary about this? If so, should I be gentle, forceful, or generous?

**Discern:** Is this partial story really just fake news? Does red dye #40 make me hyperactive?

**Determine:** Do I have enough time? Do I have enough energy / fuel to go the distance?

**Reflect...and double-check:**

When I think someone is judging me negatively, I can I stop to ask myself:

Is it ME who is judging THEM? Am I projecting my fears? Am I reading too much into the situation?

What behavior do they demonstrate that causes me to believe they are judging me negatively?

Could it be that I'm just hungry, hot (or cold), anxious about something else, or in a bad mood?

Is this just the **Fundamental Attribution Error** rearing its ugly head again?

**FUNDAMENTAL ATTRIBUTION ERROR:** (a common bias!)

When we judge others differently than we judge ourselves.

- When 'good' things happen to us, we tend to believe we earned them or deserve them. When good things happen to others, we tend to believe they were lucky.

- When unfortunate things happen to us, we tend to blame others for our misfortune, or believe we had bad luck. But when bad things happen to others, we often attribute their difficulties to their character, as if they are careless or foolish.

|         |          | Who did it?   |               |
|---------|----------|---------------|---------------|
|         |          | myself        | someone else  |
| Outcome | positive | personality   | circumstances |
|         | negative | circumstances | personality   |

**BIASES ARE SNAP-JUDGMENTS BASED ON OUR HISTORY.**

We can decide HOW to judge. We can be generous in spirit to others, as we often are for ourselves. Through our actions, we help the people that we love make better judgments.

Considerations to improve your judgment:

- Be aware of your biases and filters. Listen carefully and question assumptions, including yours.
- Question the quality of the information you receive. Consider topics through a variety of sources for a more complete picture. Get out of the 'confirmation bias' echo chamber.
- Reflect on your history with the topic: what you've learned through your life, and who the sources were that informed you. Were they biased? Is it time to let go of the filter of false beliefs? Look for ways to expand your experience!
- Consider what you feel and what you believe. Reflect on your values; your values drive decisions! Seek the input of a third party when you can.
- Can you see more options; esp. options that may not be offered?
- Can you consider others in a generous light: as people who are striving, and who are mostly good?
- Can you see how your behavior or comments could be misunderstood?
- Can you be flexible enough to change your perspective?

**"Replace judgment with curiosity."**

- Lynn Nottage

Finally, here are a few helpful questions to ask before making an important judgement:

1. Do I tend to act on impulse and later regret it? If so, how can I slow down and weigh my options?
2. Is this unlike anything I've seen before? If so, what should I do to learn more before I decide?
3. Are the stakes high? If so, should I do more research and gather more perspectives from others?

**When we improve our judging abilities, we can help others improve theirs, too!**

*All Fair Shake documents are written solely as 'primers' or jump-off points to stir curiosity and desire for further investigation.*