

# Judging or Judgemental?

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Tips of the Day · 2 min read

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There can be a lot of confusion around judging. It gets bad press in the practice. We're supposed to note it – day and night as 'judging, judging'. But if we don't judge, how do we come to decisions? How do we know what's skilful or unskilful and so on? We note 'judging, judging' when we hear ourselves criticising. And we love to criticise: it makes us feel grander than others and better about ourselves. When daggered towards our selves, what sweet wounding it is to beat ourselves up for we know we deserve it! These sorts of injuries rise out of the usual suspects – selfishness, hatred and fear in all their varied forms. And the delusion is that it is for the victim's good. However, the fact is that the truth of the judging may be so. If we perceive someone as deceitful, we may balk at the judgement. But they may very well practise deceitfulness. For fear of 'judging', we do not guard ourselves against their deceitfulness. Surely this is folly. If I judge myself as lazy – which I do! I might dismiss that as hateful self-judgement. But I am lazy! (Sometimes.) In civic life, when it is time to vote, we have to judge which party we are going to support. If we call it judging, we will find it difficult to come to a decision – if at all. So where does this judging go awry. Can we distinguish when we are judging and when we are really being judgemental? Surely that's where the confusion lies. And to be judgemental is to judge the person rather than the act, the politician and party rather than the policy. To come from a position of pride, aversion and so on. The judgemental is a product of conceit. Better than, worse than or equal to. It's always about me and other. Even when it's about me only, it presumes the standard of the other. The old adage: hate the deed not the doer, sounds easy. But I was deceived by that person and to separate the deceit from the person is no easy thing. One way, perhaps, is to phrase what has happened in terms of what was done or received and how we were affected by it. 'I was told to come to party at 10 Baker St. I found there was no such place. It was cruel joke at my expense. I feel hurt. I feel vengeful. I shall wait till equanimity arises. And decide what to do then. But for sure I won't be deceived again. I shall double check.' As I said, no easy thing. But try we must. In our meditation, of course, it shouldn't mean we stop noting 'judging', but rather that we clearly see it is 'judging, judging' and that's ok. When we can discern there is 'judgemental, judgmental', then we should note that and know it to be unskilful. The distinction is difficult to see, but unless we do so, we will cause unnecessary suffering for ourselves.

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