

YOU BE THE JUDGE Use self-judgment constructively and you'll be better for it



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I'M JUDGMENTAL. SURE, I TELL MYSELF I'M NOT. BUT I JUDGE CONSTANTLY. To assuage my guilt, I consider my judgment warranted. In what do I sit in judgment? Me.

My disclosure is also tempered because I know I am not alone. People who are reflective often judge themselves numerous times a day. Was that the right decision? Did I word that the right way? This internal analysis results in a steady stream of self-judgment.

THE GOOD

There are those who sit in judgment of themselves and believe every decision they make is a good one. Delusions of grandeur keep us from the motivation to change, but to remain competitive, change must occur.

I call it the "success trap." It is dangerous to think that all the positives that brought you success will keep you on that path. As Marshall Goldsmith, an executive coach and author of, *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*, said, "The 'good news' is that these positive memories build our self-confidence and inspire us to try to succeed even more. The 'bad news' is our delusional self-image can make it very hard to hear negative feedback and admit that we need to change."

THE BAD

Some individuals find fault with too many decisions they make and actions they take; they are exceptionally self-critical—always second-guessing themselves. The result is paralysis in

energy, risk-taking, decision-making and thus, in succeeding. The more self-critical you are, the more you push success away.

Use cognitive therapy to challenge your thinking and change the self-talk you repeat. Force your internal thinking to show confidence and courage, and your external actions and demeanor will change.

THE UGLY

Judgment gets destructive when it turns into harsh criticism of others. When we judge the behavior and actions of employees, vendors, bosses and friends as consistently bad, we respond to them in a way that shuts them down, or results in sabotage.

To move past the unhelpful judgment you can do the following: One, have realistic expectations about people. Compare what you expect to what others have done in the past—are your expectations achievable? Two, ask if you're striving for impossible perfection. Use my acronym DIME™ to ask: Does It Matter Enough? Is this something that must be done an exact way...or can you let this go? Three, use productive criticism to respond to poor work behavior or performance that does matter.

BEST PRACTICES

The best court judges apply leniency in a fair manner when it is deserved, and provide a negative consequence only when culpability is clear. Maybe we can do the same. Keep the analysis, but ditch the judgment and use lessons learned to move forward to success. ■