

Taking a Nonjudgmental Stance

I absolutely "love" (which is a judgment) the concept of taking a nonjudgmental perspective. Let's explore how "facts" behind "judgments" can help you understand the concept of nonjudgment.

There are **three types of judgment: judging others, judging ourselves, and others judging us.** Often the more we judge ourselves, the more we think others are judging us. **Instead of judging, we can learn to look at situations using "just the facts" descriptors.** Perhaps, this can help us begin to look at life, others, and ourselves with compassion and loving-kindness.

See if you can figure out which of the following statements are "just the facts" and which are "judgments." You may want to bring awareness to your Mind States as you read the statements. Which statements elicit a greater emotional reaction and which provide you with information that may help you make changes?

- You are doing a great job reading all this information about Mindfulness.
- You are still here, hanging in there reading about mindfulness.

- I absolutely hated the movie.
- I found the movie very scary and spent most of the time with my eyes closed.

- Your room is dirty, filthy, disgusting.
- Your room has soda cans all over the floor, there are candy wrappers and crumbs in your bed, and there are clean clothes all over the floor.

- You are so lazy. Help me with the dishes.
- You have spent the past 6 hours on the couch playing video games and now I would like you to help me with the dishes.

- That child is a bully.
- That child blocked a girl from sliding down a slide.

- I love your drawings. You are so amazing and talented in art.
- Your drawings are so colorful and when I look at them they make me feel like I am right there in the painting. Your work is very detailed and your use of shading really brings depth to the work.

- I dropped the pencil. I am so dumb.
- I dropped a pencil.

- I am such a terrible person. I keep judging.
- Oops! There I go again. I just judged. Let's look at the facts.

In your daily life, see if you can catch yourself using judgments-- and gently, with kindness, give yourself permission to step back and describe the situations using "just the facts" descriptors. One way to move from a judgment to a nonjudgmental descriptive statement is to say: **“When _____(describe situation) happens, I feel _____(use feeling word)”**. For example, “When you look away while I talk to you, I feel angry and sad,” “When I make a mistake, I feel extremely anxious.” Also, to move toward compassion and away from judgments, we can remember to view situations using the Basic Assumption: “We Are All Doing the Best We Can.” Run an experiment and observe what happens. And remember: don't judge the judgments. Just notice and, if you wish, make changes.

Mindfulness Practices:

If you want to practice describing “just the facts,” you can do a **short mindfulness practice** by yourself or with others. Pick an object (e.g. your shoes, a flower, a picture, a bell, a raisin) and spend 3 to 5 minutes **observing** the object with all your senses (touch, smell, sound, and sight). If it is a stationary object, you may even want to get up and look at the object from different perspectives. You can touch it, feel the texture and temperature, smell it, listen to the sound it makes, and when appropriate (if it's edible) taste it. After 3 to 5 minutes, stop and **describe** the object using "just the facts" statements.

Another interesting **experiment in being as factual as possible during communication** is as follows. Have someone draw a picture that has different geometrical shapes (circles, triangles, squares). Then have that person use "just the facts" descriptors of the picture to help you draw the picture without looking at it. No help, no feedback is to be given to you while you are drawing. When the person thinks that they are done describing the picture, compare the two drawings. If you wish, you can then switch roles. Usually, this exercise shows us how truly challenging it is to clearly understand another person's perspective, even when we are doing the best we can to communicate clearly and calmly. Imagine then what happens to communication and understanding when we are in an emotional state of mind.

Hopefully after you've done some experimenting on your own, you will discover how **taking a nonjudgmental stance, focusing on “just the facts,” moves us away from interpretations that are emotionally loaded, and moves us toward compassion for ourselves and others.**