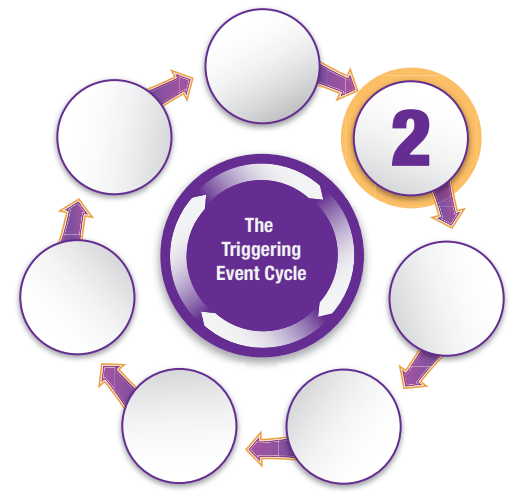


STEP 2: JUDGMENTS

Many of us readily judge people and situations using either-or frameworks: something is either good or bad, right or wrong, perfect or worthless. When we operate out of these rigid polarities we usually end up harshly judging and criticizing ourselves or others. The “pay-off” for this type of thinking is we either get to feel superior to others or we get a painful hit of shame and worthlessness.



Judgments and either/or thinking are closely connected to viewing people as either victims or perpetrators. I believe this mindset is a particularly dangerous trap. When I judge others as perpetrators I no longer see them in their full humanity and I can distance myself from them. Seeing myself or others as victims reinforces the illusion of helplessness and powerlessness to influence our life experiences.

“Whenever you are about to find fault with someone, ask yourself the following question: What fault of mine most nearly resembles the one I am about to criticize?”

— Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*

There is a spiritual principle: We are what we judge. When I have criticized others in the workplace, I often realize that their behaviors reflect back and mirror something that I do not like about myself. The key is to recognize when I am being judgmental and to explore the roots and reasons I may be focusing on others in that moment.

Questions: Useful questions to explore when we notice we are judging and criticizing others include, “How am I just like this person?” and “What am I trying to avoid in me by over-focusing on them?” and “What is my “pay-off” for judging and criticizing them?”

Questions to explore when we are judging ourselves include, “What am I getting out of this self-criticism?” and “Where did I first hear this type of criticism about myself?” and “What are more reasonable, accurate assessments of the situation? Of me”

Shift Your Judgments

Directions: When we notice we are stuck in a right/wrong thinking pattern we can choose a more useful approach by identifying what is more productive or less productive given the intended outcomes of the situation. This shift away from judgments to focusing on the usefulness of actions or comments within a given context opens the possibility exploring a wider range of solutions and approaches.

Reflect back on a difficult situation and in the left-hand column, write any judgments or right/wrong thinking that might have fueled your triggered reaction. Then rewrite these beliefs.

Judgment or right/wrong thinking	More useful thought
	
	
	
	
	