

Judgment & Discernment in Relationship

Simply put, when we are judging in relation to another person, the attention is on them. When we are discerning in relation to another person, the attention is on us. To know whether you are in judgment or discernment in your relationship with another person, just look where your attention is.

For example, say there is someone in your daily orbit who has a biting sense of humor, often uses sarcasm, and occasionally directs it at you. If you were reflecting on your relationship with this person and had thoughts about what a nasty person they were, how they didn't have a clue about wise speech and, in general, was just wrong, then you would be in judgment. If you were reflecting on your relationship with this person and connected with the fact that almost every time you are with them, you feel afraid, less than, and, in general, on guard, then you would be discerning. The discernment would know, "this person is not a safe person for me." "I suffer when I'm with this person." With this clarity, then you might decide to avoid them, or perhaps, if the relationship meant enough to you, speak with them about your experience and any requests you have of them.

So with discernment, we don't make the other person wrong or bad, yet it offers the clarity about how best to move forward in relation to this other person. We're clear that their behavior, or certain behaviors are not acceptable to us, and at the same time we have the room for them to be an imperfect human being, just like ourselves. Ram Das once said, "do what you will with another person, just don't put them out of your heart." When we can discern and avoid judgment, we are in this territory.