

## Judgments

The unending torrent of liking and disliking in response to our environment is at the root of judgment. Pleasure and displeasure in reaction to sensory input is natural and inevitable, but it is only the beginning. As people, ideas, and feelings come before us we grasp onto some and push others away. "I like that" leads to "I want more." "I don't like that" shifts into "I want it to go away." Many judgments are easy to notice, such as thinking of someone as attractive or ugly, or thinking of what someone said as true or false. *Bringing these judgments to awareness we gain a window into our reactive nature and open to the possibility of a more evenhanded way of being.*

*In a most subtle way these kinds of responses are always with us.* We detect them when they are gross and bring them up in dialogue. As awareness becomes subtler, more subtle judgments present themselves. As this occurs we may find ourselves seeming to be more judging than ever. We judge ourselves for being judging. The morass seems endless. The pain and stress of judgment becomes evident. *Patience and acceptance are essential.*

*Bringing judgments into the light of meditative awareness offers us the gift of knowing their automatic and impersonal nature. Judgments arise out of deeply seated conditioning.* Seeing this, we rest patiently in the flux of judgment; it is foolish to try and stop it. Indeed, some judgments are necessary for day-to-day functioning: Shall I cross the street now? Is this person dangerous? Shall I go to this neighborhood, eat this food, or say how I really feel? These necessary judgments, too, can be known as they arise. However, it is the automatic, conditioned judgments that cause us the most trouble. The judging mind can be observed with clear awareness and the acceptance inherent in *pause-relax-open*. In this way, contemplating judgments is cultivating equanimity. The mind learns to simply know experience as it arises and remain poised in the moment, not grasping or pushing away. The wanting and aversion that previously seemed so essential are now experienced as conceptual and conditioned.

*By noting, while it is happening, how judgment rises and falls dependent upon conditions, a natural letting go occurs.* It becomes clear that intelligence, freedom, and even pain and pleasure shift along with the mind that gives birth to these emotions and concepts. *Equanimity does not lead to apathy; it brings about openness to all experience. Equanimity yields wise speech and action as we participate in the moment with no expectations.*

Interpersonal Mindfulness Program, Gregory Kramer