

## How to be Less Critical of Yourself and Others

We all have our own set of values. While having values is very positive, there's also a risk of getting over-enthusiastic and expecting others to behave a certain way. It's important to realize that there's no single way to live life or view the world. ***You're limiting your personal growth and enjoyment when you expect others to live according to your rules.***

Being critical of others has additional consequences. If you're hard on others, you're also hard on yourself. Your self-esteem and happiness suffer.

***Life is simply more enjoyable when we accept others and ourselves.***

**Use these strategies to remove your expectations and be less critical:**

1. **Be aware of critical thoughts.** Everything has a beginning. Before you can make critical judgments and say critical things, there has to be a critical thought. ***This is your cue to change your thought process.***

- Monitor your thoughts and remind yourself to be more open-minded.

2. **Pause for five seconds and take a deep breath.** In most cases, you're safe until you open your mouth. When you find yourself feeling judgmental, stop and take a short pause. You'll interrupt your thought pattern and give yourself a chance to think before you say something you might regret.
  - ***How many times have you wished you could take back something you've said?*** That doesn't have to happen again in the future.
  
3. **Understand that people, including yourself, are doing the best they can.** That's not to say that everyone is living up to their potential. But everyone has their own unique past, tragedies, upbringing, health issues, and way of viewing the world. Faced with the same experiences, you can't be certain you would do any better.
  - The person you're judging might be doing a lot better than you think if only you knew the entire story.
  
4. **Avoid stereotyping. *There are CEOs with tattoos and wonderful parents that used to be exotic dancers.*** You're only fooling yourself if you believe you can judge someone based on a couple of characteristics or facts. Are you strong and patient enough to determine the truth about the other person?

5. **Find a role model.** You know someone that's very accepting of everyone. Sit down and speak with them. Ask them how they manage to be so non-critical of everyone. Ask them what they think when they see a Goth teenager covered in tattoos and piercings.
  - Their thoughts are the answer to your struggle.
  
6. **The past doesn't have to equal the future.** Everyone makes mistakes. Those mistakes don't have to be repeated. Understand that people can learn from their errors. *You wouldn't want to be judged by your greatest mistake, nor would it provide an accurate view of you.* Give others the same consideration.
  
7. **Respect the freedom of others.** No one elected you to decide how others should live their lives. It's arrogant and delusional to believe that your way is the right way for everyone. You have the option to live your life the way you choose. Provide the same freedom to others.
  
8. **Let go of your expectations.** Having expectations is a form of trying to control others. Become more flexible. When you have expectations, they're sure to be violated. There's only one way you can feel at that point: upset.
  - Let go of your expectations and accept the outcome without judgment.

If you have a habit of being critical, you'll get more out of life if you reverse that tendency. This is a great opportunity to be patient and understanding with yourself. ***The people that annoy us are here to teach us about ourselves.***

Make an effort to learn more about someone you don't like. You might find that your first impression was incorrect!