

ARTICLE 1

Unproductive Patterns of Listening Judgment and Criticism

Judgment takes place when our listening focuses on what we see as flaws or greatness in another person's comments or ideas. Anytime we think or make a judgment statement, something like, "That's a great idea!" or "That won't work!" while another is speaking, we have presented ourselves as the authority, as the "wise one" over the situation. What we want to do, at the very least, is to present the respectful attitude of listening fully to what the speaker has to say.

Judgment, as criticism, occurs when we feel a dissonance between what the speaker says and what we think and believe. Use of negative judgment or criticism may be perceived by others as adversarial, and thus, the conversation begins to shut down or take on a totally different tone. Positive judgments given as compliments feel good for a few moments but also can be perceived as if you believe you know best or you are an authority. Years of leadership and communication experiences and research show how criticism or negative judgment is a sure way to reduce or limit thinking, inspiration, and creativity.

Refraining from listening with an attitude of judgment may present challenges for leaders because, as a leader, you may have been trained or conditioned to appear to know best.

The following are examples of judgment or criticism thoughts or statements:

- How ridiculous!
- I tried that three years ago.
- She's not serious.
- Your premise is completely flawed.
- I like what Ann said. *(As soon as you approve of one idea, you discredit others.)*
- I tried that once, and it didn't work.
- Why on earth would you want to do that?

Kee, K. (2017). *Results coaching next steps: Leading for Growth and Change*. Corwin A SAGE Company.