

Judging Other People

Due Respect

By Rick R.

There was a time in my early days of sobriety when I would hear a Radio or TV personality talking about a person who is caught up in the disease of Alcoholism and offering their opinion that it not a disease, but a moral issue, and all they have to do is quit drinking and they would be fine, I realize how easy it would be for a normal person to miss-judge the issue. I think we all have done our share of that before we admitted that we were Alcoholics. I think of how easy it is to do the same thing long after being sober. It may not be the same disease/moral issue but other issues that we throw around when we see other people acting in a way that we don't necessarily agree with. We may, for instance, see a person who is displaying symptoms of O.C.D. and refer to them as a neat freak, or see a person who is Hyperactive and complains that he/she never shuts up. Another person may be so insecure that they need a lot of attention so they act out more than we would like, so it's easy for us to point out their faults. These are all symptoms of deeper-rooted emotional problems.

Usually, when we first enter Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) we think everyone in the room is an angel, but within a few weeks, we start to find fault with some of them and before long we put everyone into categories. This is how human nature usually goes, but outside of the rooms of A.A. they don't need to be aware of it as much as we do in the program. None of us are without our own Idiosyncrasies and often-times they are masked by our drinking habit and when we abstain for a while, these other flaws in our makeup come to the surface and we sometimes don't even recognize them in ourselves. WE cannot be judgmental about those other people based on their behavior alone. At best, we could develop enough empathy and compassion to look beneath the surface. When we recognize that flaw that we overlooked in the past, our hearts usually go out to that person and that is where the emotional healing starts within us. We can begin to take a second look at that person and try to get our own Ego out of the way. We can't be selective about who we do or don't judge.

I was telling a friend about how, after being divorced from my first wife for about four years and after being sober for two years at that time, I never missed a chance to point out her faults. Then I came to realize that she had problems of her own and I didn't want to be one of her problems. From that day on, I stopped criticizing her, and began treating her with Kindness and Empathy. Thirty years later at a meeting I made a statement that I would give \$100 to anyone that had ever heard me say one negative thing about my first wife, and nobody could collect on it. My friend responded that he was going to take that same approach and start to treat his former wife with DUE RESPECT.

Are we being honest when we say that we *practice these principles in all our affairs* if we are still willing to criticize others simply because we are hurt or humiliated as the result of a failed marriage or any other issue that brings out the worst in us? Can we be selective about which of these principles we practice? If not, maybe we can take a second look at our own flaws in the same way we look at the ones we find in others. When we address these issues this way, we can begin the practice of self-restraint and regain our self-respect.