

The Quest4Life Podcast Show Notes:

Season #3, Episode #29: It's None of Your Business

Podcast Host: Dr. Ed Slover

Let's start by asking a couple questions.

Are you judgmental?

Do you judge others?

If you answered "Yes" to both questions, you're right, and by answering "Yes" to both questions are likely possess a heightened level of self-awareness, if for no other reason than you know that about yourself. You know you judge others.

If you answered "No" to one or both questions, what I'm going to say next will be somewhat off-putting. You're mistaken because the reality of the human condition is to judge. It's to constantly evaluate people and situations.

Humans are inherently programmed to judge the proverbial book by its cover...and...we continue judging long after we've gotten to know someone, which is to say that we don't simply judge others upon meeting them for the first time or the acquaintance we bump into on occasion. No.

Humans make constant evaluations of others, which serves as points of comparison to make us feel better about ourselves.

We see this frequently in contemporary society with what's known as "virtue signaling," which is when a person signals their own moral virtues and values while simultaneously subordinating the virtues and values of others...at least in their own mind.

And what's challenging about acknowledging that we judge others, especially if you're someone who believes you don't, is that recognizing that behavior in ourselves makes us feel bad about ourselves.

Our proclivity to judge others is, in many ways, something we can't help, and learning that other people's judgments of us is really none of our business can level-up your mindset to achieve peak performance by focusing on yourself rather than how others perceive you.

What follows helps explain why people judge others and outlines ways that can help you to stop worrying about what others think of you – it's none of your business anyway - so you can level-up your mindset and design healthier, happier relationships.

Why People Judge

Why do people judge?

As you might expect, answers to that question are multi-faceted and multi-layered.

At its most basic, humans are built to make cognitive adaptations. The Theory of Cognitive Adaptation, first written about in the early-to-mid-1980s in the journal, *Psychological Bulletin*, asserts that humans cope with threats in their lives by creating a set of positive illusions, which serve to protect their psychological health.

These coping mechanisms and the positive illusions people create are deeply rooted in human behavior, such as detecting danger or making decisions that allow for reproduction, survival, and evolution. Another way of stating this is that people make judgments and assessments that are labeled and filed away until we need to retrieve and utilize our interpretations of that information.

The specific reason why it's none of your business to learn what others think of you is that it, generally, isn't helpful. And we've talked about this idea on previous episodes of The Quest4Life Podcast that when you put your self-worth in the hands of others, you will live a life fraught with disappointment.

After all, other people's impressions, or judgments, of us lead to our wanting to please others at the expense of living to an authentic, integrated version of ourselves.

Said differently, in the pursuit of pleasing others, we strive to meet or exceed their expectations for us, which, invariably, becomes a moving target.

It should be noted, however, that, as children, we need to know what our parent's expectations for us are, if for no other reason than we learn with "good" looks like.

That said, as adults, what others think about you really doesn't matter, which may sound antithetical to engaging in cooperative relationships with others. Ironically, you can still engage cooperatively with others without needing to know what others think about you, if for no other reason than you can't read someone's mind.

Assumptions aside, we have no idea what other people are thinking unless they say it out loud. And still, we often make assumptions about what other people are thinking and, by virtue of our assumptions, which are frequently flawed, we modify our behavior according to how WE THINK they are judging us.

Another reason why what other people think of you is none of your business is that you can't control what others think of you.

Think of it this way, each person's perspective is unique to them and, technically speaking, their perspective or perception of you has nothing to do with you!

Still another reason why what other people think of you is none of your business is that another person's judgment is less about you and more about them.

Research on the topic suggests that our perceptions of others reveal so much about our own personalities. Stated differently, strong associations exist between positively judging others and how enthusiastic, happy, kind-hearted, courteous, emotionally stable, and capable the person describes oneself and how they are described by others.

Thus, judging others positively reveals our own positive traits. The converse is true too and we don't like that about ourselves. Ironically, we think we are externalizing the judgment when, in fact, we are making a value judgment about ourselves.

Rest assured, that you're being judged. You're constantly being evaluated. That is going to happen, but you have zero control of whether someone holds you in high regard or not regardless of how many times you interact with them or whether you're friendly or cold and distant.

4 Ways to Stop Worrying What Others Think of You

#1: Understand Why You Care

To move beyond caring about other people's judgment of you and to find solace in the reality that it's none of your business, you need to know where the energy you are devoting to caring is coming from. If you're like most people, it stems from childhood.

As we navigate the seeking of approval from the adults in our lives to navigating our social circles throughout school, we adopt certain beliefs and ideologies that favor behaviors aligned with being liked and accepted. And in the social media age, the pursuit of being liked and accepted has only been magnified.

But rather than being stressed, anxious, and, ultimately, exhausted, engage in conscious self-reflection as to why you believe that only a certain type of behavior allows you to be liked and accepted. Once you assess your belief system, ask yourself, "What if I lived my life authentically according to the way I wanted to live my life?" and if others don't accept me for it, it's more of a reflection on them, you.

#2: Tell Yourself Everyday – "What others think of me is none of my business."

The reason for stating this mantra is that when we put a disproportionate amount of time and energy into what other people think of us, we attach ourselves to an outcome we have absolutely no control over. As previously mentioned, you have no control over what people think or how they are judging you. And to believe that you can control what other people think and how they judge you is, quite simply, foolish. It's grounded in your egoic mindset, and it's perfectly flawed. You can't control others and continually trying to do so is a fool's errand

#3: Direct Your Energy toward Something Positive

When you find yourself trapped in the labyrinth of your mind inside a negative feedback loop worrying about what others think of you, catch yourself, which is easier said than done, but catch yourself and shift your mental gaze toward something you love or something about which you're passionate. You may also seek to engage in a new or creative activity, such as journaling, dancing, playing music, or going for a hike in nature.

The goal here, of course, is to engage in shifted thought patterns and/or activities that move you from being mired in what other people think toward things that genuinely add productive value to your life.

#4: Practice Daily Self-Love & Acceptance

Knowing that what other people think of you or how they judge you really has nothing to do with you, practicing self-love and acceptance releases you from any attachment to perceived outcomes related to other people.

Some tried and true daily self-love and acceptance practices include meditation, breathwork, yoga, eating healthy, regular exercise, or spending time in nature.

No matter what you pick, giving yourself the time and attention you deserve reinforces the idea that you can't possibly be better for anyone else until you're first better for yourself.

Final Thoughts

Consider reflecting on how you can integrate each of the 4 steps mentioned into your daily life.

Ask yourself...

“Why do I care so much what others think of me?”

“What would be different about my life if I showed up as an authentic version of myself?”

“Am I willing to do what's necessary to transform my relationships with others?”

“Am I willing to move past relationships that disallow me from being my best?”

Answers to these questions will prove illuminating and...they're nobody else's business.

As usual, it's food for thought, Fellow Questers.