

JUDGER VS LEARNER QUESTIONS

Judgers and Learners ask different questions.

Judger questions constrict and limit, and sound like this:

What's wrong with me?
Whose fault is it?
Why am I a failure?
Why can't I do anything right?
Why are they so clueless and frustrating?
Haven't we already been there, don't that?
Why bother?

On the other hand, Learner questions are open, energizing questions that sound like this:

What happened?
What do I want?
What's useful about this?
What can I learn?
What's the other person thinking, feeling, and wanting?
What are my choices?
What's best to do now?
What's possible?

The Learner mindset opens us up to possibilities while the Judger mindset leaves us, at the very least, in an unproductive state. The Learner mindset is a choice. The Judger mindset is a reaction to our circumstances.

Most of the time, we're shifting back and forth between Learner and Judger mindsets, barely aware we have any control or choice. **Much of what we experience can just seem true or real or logical to us. We go along as if what we experience is the way things are.** Real choice begins when we are mindful enough to observe our own thoughts and feelings as well as the language we use to express them.

The trick is to be mindful of the path we are on and make the appropriate adjustment. We make that adjustment by changing the questions we are asking.

For more details about how to do this, check out Marilee Adams' book, [*Change Your Questions, Change Your Life*](#).

If we can accept the fact that we tend to gravitate to Judger, but can *choose* Learner, we can make progress by changing the questions—asking switcher questions like: Am I in Judger mode? Is this what I want? How else can I think about this?

Marilee Adams has also developed a [*workbook*](#) to help work through triggering situations and adapt and develop a learner mindset. It's a helpful companion to the book.

In the workbook, she outlines the Judger and Learner attributes. The chart over the page is very useful in understanding the *change your questions, change your life* process.



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Judger Attributes

When in Judger mindset, we can be:

- Close-Minded
- Certain
- Critical
- Judgmental
- Inflexible
- Isolated
- Problem-Focused
- Blame-Focused
- Past-Focused and Fear-Based

When in Judger mindset, we may relate to others (or ourselves) in ways that are:

- Win / Lose
- Dismissive, Demeaning
- Separate
- Destructive When in Conflict
- Likely to Go on the Attack or Be Defensive

When we listen with “Judger ears,” we tend to:

- Focus on Areas of Disagreement or What’s Not Working
- Hear Things We Disapprove of
- Notice What We Dislike
- Fear it is “Me versus Them”
- Look for Threats to Self
- Make Assumptions—and Not Question or Test Them

Learner Attributes

When in Learner mindset, we can be:

- Open-Minded
- Curious and Creative
- Appreciative
- Accepting
- Flexible
- Collaborative
- Solution-Focused
- Responsibility-Focused
- Future-Focused and Possibility-Focused

When in Learner mindset, we may relate to others (or ourselves) in ways that are:

- Win / Win
- Discerning, Accepting
- Connected
- Constructive When in Conflict
- Likely to Appreciate, Resolve, or Create

When we listen with “Learner ears,” we tend to:

- Focus on Area of Agreement and What *is* Working
- Hear Things We Approve of
- Notice What We Like
- Attempt to Understand
- Assume Positive Intention—Even if We Disagree/Dislike the Message
- Look for the value in What is Being Shared