



Thinking Beyond the "Box" of Our Judgments, by Linda Ellinor and Glenna Gerard

It is difficult, if not impossible, to be genuinely curious about someone's opinion and try to reach some deeper understanding of what

the person is thinking when you've already judged it stupid or uninformed or even dangerous. The impact on creativity is no less striking. That's why one of the basic ground rules of brainstorming is "no evaluation" any idea is a good idea. [i] At this point, you may be thinking, "Well Okay, but I already do that. I don't push my opinions on anybody. And I listen, even when I don't

agree." We invite you to consider that you may not be particularly challenged until someone says something that runs counter to a deeply held belief of yours and then, suddenly, you find yourself on "full autopilot" with not a millimeter of distance between you and your judgments. You will find yourself acting out your judgments rather than suspending them. You may not jump on the person or even strongly express your dissent, but you will most assuredly stop listening. Practicing suspension of judgment requires that you be willing to release, at least temporarily, your certainties, your attachment to your judgments, opinions, and evaluations, even in the most trying of circumstances. To do this, you will need to begin developing a degree of detachment from your judgments, otherwise you will find yourself moved by them so quickly that your conscious mind will have no time to think and respond from a more considered vantage point. Being detached does not mean that you are completely separate from your judgments or that you have no connection to them. Detachment is about creating an internal neutral observer that is not provoked by, and therefore not at the effect of whatever judgments, thoughts, or feelings might arise in a conversation or dialogue. When our thoughts or judgments put us into an autopilot reactive mode, we lose most, if not all, of our ability to listen openly. --Linda Ellinor and Glenna Gerard