

JULY 11

*There are two ways of spreading light: to be the
candle or the mirror that reflects it.*

—Edith Wharton

Releasing Our Judgments

An underlying theme in a Nonviolent Communication consciousness is to translate our judgments into feelings and needs. It is impossible to value other people's needs and remain compassionate if we simultaneously harbor judgments. Releasing judgments, however, can feel like a monumental task. It seemed that way for me at first. My mind seemed to lodge a judgment per second in an effort to organize data into good or bad categories. My thoughts would go like this: This dress is pretty and that one isn't, this person drives well and that person doesn't, this yard is well kept and that one isn't, this road is in bad condition, this person is a bad boss—and on it went. The smallest of details had to be judged and categorized.

Finally I became willing to shift this behavior. I started to translate my judgments into acknowledging how something affected me. So when I caught myself thinking, "What a crummy road," I would translate it into "This road is a lot rougher than I'm used to, and I'm a little worried about my tires." I would translate "What a grumpy mother" into "When I see that woman talk to her children in that way, I feel sad because I value more patience." Or sometimes I would empathize with the mother in my mind by saying, "I bet that mother is feeling overwhelmed and needs a break." Once I got into the habit of this, my judgments began to subside dramatically. It became easy to love people and feel

compassion for them, and I experienced a freedom I had never known before. This kind of a shift takes focus and commitment, but the rewards are many.

Be aware of your judgments today and try to translate them into how the situation affects your state of needs.



JULY 12

*I have a simple philosophy. Fill what's empty.
Empty what's full. And scratch where it itches.*

—Alice Roosevelt Longworth

Taking Responsibility for Our Requests

Do you ever wonder if the reason your needs don't often get met has something to do with you? I used to think this, but I would reassure myself that there was nothing wrong with me. Somehow it seemed more comfortable to blame other people for their inability to meet my needs properly. Then I started to notice that people did exactly what I'd asked, and my needs still did not get met. This was the stage of my emotional recovery in which I became acutely aware of how important it is to design requests to fit specific needs. One time I wanted to ensure that I was heard, so I asked my friend how he felt about what I said. It was a clear request, but it didn't meet *my need for being heard*. A more effective request would have been to ask him to *tell me what he heard me say*. Another time, I asked a friend to go to a movie with me and I went home that night feeling unsatisfied. Then I