

A simple way to improve your judgment — by being more curious

Video Transcript:

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Imagine you're onstage doing improv comedy.

Your partner says, "Hi, I'm a rainbow trout."

You could respond with judgment and end the conversation: "No, you're not."

Or you could get curious: "Oh! And where are you from?"

That curiosity opens up your exchange to all kinds of possibilities. It's what makes improv comedy work.

Now, there's a mindset from improv that's also important for inclusive leadership: Quick judgment narrows your view, while curiosity expands it.

I recently had a member of my team turn in a project that was wildly different than my expectations. There was that surprise — my survival brain kicked in with judgment before my thinking brain could catch up. My first thoughts were, *This person is disengaged. They didn't pay attention. And even, They don't have the capability for this job.*

Being caught off guard, I noticed that surprise — and I paused. Instead of continuing down the road of thinking, "Oh no!" I shifted to: "Oh, interesting! I wonder why that's happening?"

And when I paused and asked myself, *What could have contributed to this that I'm not considering?* I gave my brain time to shift out of survival mode and think more objectively.

Maybe they're overloaded with other things. Or maybe I didn't explain the assignment well.

I went into a conversation with them open to all the possibilities, asking how they saw the issue, then really listening. It was way more productive than if I had gone in with judgment.

When you get caught off guard, borrow a lesson from improv: Suspend judgment, choose curiosity, and you might learn something new in the process.



Daniel Martin is a FranklinCovey Senior Solution Architect and Inclusion Expert who brings a unique blend of business acumen, creative thinking, and emotional intelligence to every engagement. He has also been a sales leader at PepsiCo, where he developed teams and mentored new leaders, and a meditation teacher. Daniel loves to push leaders to challenge the way they see themselves, their teams, and the work they do.