

COMPARISONS

Worth less (than) or worthless

Bullying is bad enough if you do it to others, but how many of you bully yourself repeatedly by knocking yourself down as if you were fighting yourself in the boxing ring, comparing yourself and your abilities, life experience or expertise with others and feeling and acting as if you are worth less than others, defeated in the ring before you even start boxing?

Compare and contrast

The words compare and contrast remind me of my school exam days. Essentially what was being asked was to outline the differences and the similarities between two things – perhaps two books, quotes, arguments or methods for example. To answer the question completely and to score well, it was important to balance out the number of differences with the number of similarities that you wrote about.

In life don't you find yourself comparing more often than contrasting and this is usually done from an underdog perspective or with a "loser" mentality. "So and so has such and such more than I have." "She's smarter, more beautiful or has more boyfriends than I do." "He gets things much more easily than I do." There is a real sense of disempowerment when you view life from this perspective. Subconsciously it says you are unhappy with your lot, unhappy with yourself and unhappy with the universe. Life does not seem fair and when you continue to compare yourself in this way, you will attract more of that and this becomes your "world view" and ultimately the view of yourself.

Comparisons are value judgements

I remember bringing up my three teenagers. One particular year, one was labelled the bad or naughty girl. Sure she was hard work because she challenged the system so to speak, but I always tried to defend her and the situation by seeing what was underneath her so called "naughty" or challenging behaviour and attitude. Once I understood this, it was almost no wonder that she wanted to be angry at the world and test herself and her boundaries out for a short while. I would also try and help people not to compare my children or label them as good or bad. Their judgement of good was often associated with their value of "towing the line" and doing what the parents expected. According to my values however, my other more "compliant" children were no more "good or bad" than their sibling who pushed boundaries. They were just experiencing the world in different ways. The compliant ones did not venture out of their comfort zone or challenge their own identity in the way that the other teenager did. In my mind they will do that at some other time in their life and then possibly get labelled as misfits, naughty, going through mid-life crisis or compared in some other way.

It is the same with the whole teacher's pet or dad's favourite scenario. People's judgements or comparison calls are not so much about their "favourite", but someone that fits that person's mould of what is OK, acceptable or favourable – based on their own life upbringing, life experience and values. In my experience it is often the people in our lives who cause us some "grief", are very different from us or are people who "push our buttons" in certain ways that really help us in our growth more so than the ones who fit within our comfort zone, value system and acceptability range or in many cases, they reflect some aspect of ourselves that has laid latent or unexpressed in ourselves – that perhaps would like expressing!

Culprit versus victim

At some stage in your life you may have been compared unfavourably (or even favourably) to someone else? What truth was there in this comparison or was it just someone's opinion, or does the comparison actually reflect something of the "accuser" or culprit?

Start seeing opinions or judgements as a reflection of the other person - often something that is missing or maybe exaggerated within themselves, rather than a truthful reflection of who you really are.

It reminds me of my mother-in-law, who had quite a sharp tongue. After the accident killing her daughter-in-law, she took on the "mother role" to the grandchildren. When I came along and married their father and became "mother" to these girls, my mother-in-law's role and identity ceased to be what it previously was. Before too long I had some very nasty comparisons and judgement calls made on me. Sure I was hurt at the vindictiveness and words that were shot at me (and literally that is how I felt it in my body at the time) but I also know that her comments and behaviour were not saying that I was a "bad mother" and "how could I possibly call myself a mother in the first place!" but more a reflection of her own sadness at having lost a role that was important to her. Her own feelings of inadequacy and victimhood, played out in this case, I believe in her becoming the "culprit" or accuser.

Relate with compassion versus retaliate with comparisons

The culprit of comparisons or the harshest critic is often the victim of their own or others comparisons. Relate to them with compassion rather than retaliate with comparisons.

I could have remained victim to her harsh comparisons or judgements – face down in the boxing ring. I could have also played the "culprit" role by responding back in kind (or not so kindly actually!) – doing the quick jabs or uppercuts. Instead I chose not to feel I was to blame, nor did I feel responsible for her feelings, words and actions. Instead I chose to try and understand the situation and her feelings and find an amicable solution to her maintaining relationships and a role in her grandchildren's lives, and in my husband's and my life to some degree without "mothering" us as well in the process. Distance, in the sense of moving out of their backyard and having our own independence also helped the situation.

It also helps to relate to others (and to yourself) with compassion rather than retaliate with comparisons and further judgements. Do you really understand what it is like to be "in the other person's skin?" Put yourself in their shoes. Start to find out more about what makes them tick. What is underlying what they are doing? How happy are they really? What would really make them happy? How can you best support them in this?

Crippling comparisons – Body reactions

Initially when reacting to my mother in laws accusations, my body went into "death and dying" mode. I gasped with shortness of breath for quite some time. My heart raced as if it were to beat its last beats. I got headaches. I cried and cried for days. Parts of me felt numb. Similarly with another family incident when again I was harshly judged and compared, half of my face was temporarily numbed and paralysed, I had to go and get my head scanned and a cardiogram done. My body wanted to run away, hide and shut down. My body manifested that for me until I started relating to the situation and the person with compassion. The symptoms then eased and disappeared, only rearing their heads when I chose to dwell on the situation again in the old light or become victim again temporarily.

What does it cost you when you continue to judge and react, rather than see yourself and others with compassionate eyes? What happens in your body when you ease up on such harsh judgements?

Admire and aspire versus compare and despair

Who do you know, who has special qualities, ways of dealing with things, personality traits, skills, expertise or a vision for their life that you admire and aspire to?

Constant comparison can lead to feelings of unworthiness and despair, but equally comparison in the light of self improvement and becoming the “best sportsman/woman of your own life” can be a motivating force. Start loving yourself at whatever stage you are at in life whilst admiring and aspiring and using other role models to support you change what you wish to change, develop what you wish to develop in yourself and let go of parts of you that no longer align with you being your best.

You can also focus on being the best role-model that others will admire and aspire to – not based on what your parents or teachers, for example, would think was admirable but what really feels like YOU. We all have something to role-model to others.

Competition versus cooperation

Another way of looking at comparisons is rather than seeing life as a competition, to see it more in the light of cooperation or complementing each other. I have been reading a book called “Lucky legs” by Steve Gurney, a New Zealander who has achieved incredible success in endurance adventure events. Compared very unfavourable as a youngster, he also admits that he was a hopeless speed runner at school. Nevertheless he found his niche in long term stamina events. In some of his competitions which required teams of people to work together, they were all top in their field – some slightly faster, some slightly fitter, some slightly more daring, some slightly more technically-minded and so on. The team had to finish together, so instead of trying to outplay or outrun each other they had to bring their strengths to the fore - much like in a family or in a workplace, classroom or organisation. The best results in life often come from a mixture of competition and cooperation and using each person’s strengths to the team’s advantage.

Individual competitor versus team player

No one is inherently worth more or worth less than anyone else. Everyone has a place and reason for being here. Much like body parts making up your body and needing to complement (rather than compare with) each other for peak performance, you are not an individual competitor in life. You are part of a team of which you play a vital part.



listen

Comparisons

Inspiration - inspire me

Much like body parts making up your body and needing to complement (rather than compare with) each other for peak performance, you are not an individual competitor in life. You are part of a team of which you play a vital part. JF

Constant comparison can lead to feelings of unworthiness and despair, but equally comparison in the light of self improvement and becoming the “best sportsman/woman of your own life” can be a motivating force. JF

The harshest critic is often the victim of their own or others’ comparisons. Relate to them with compassion rather than retaliate with comparisons. JF

Reflection – reflect on me

- Who is my biggest critic – me or others?
- Who in my life have I most compared myself to / I mostly been compared to? What have I taken that to mean about me / others?
- How do I think my parents or other people in my circle of influence wish(ed) me to be? What does that say about them?
- How did my family compare to the family down the road? What do I now appreciate about my family and the circumstances of my upbringing?
- How do I compare to the way the media frames success, beauty, relationships, health...? How do I allow this to influence me positively / negatively?
- What are the values underlying my judgements of others? How does this influence my life?
- What happens in my body when I feel judged, put down or compared?
- How have I allowed judgments or comparisons to cripple me or carry me forward?
- Who do I admire and aspire to? What steps can I take now to climb my own personal growth ladder? What do I wish to positively role-model to others?
- How can using my skills, passion, talents and personality and cooperating with others, rather than being an individual competitor, bring positive benefits to me and others?

Action – act on me

- Write a “50 great things about me” list. Yes 50! Be specific. Acknowledge the power of who you are as you write each and every one.

- Consider someone, a group of people, community or nation who you feel struggles more than you do. Offer support in some way – be it prayer, financial assistance, words of advice or wisdom, resources, your time, volunteer your skills as part of a group project.
 - Consider something you do that is not naturally who you are, but is something you have developed as part of someone else's expectation of you -whether it is a real or perceived expectation. Start being more honest with who you are, do something different today and risk being more yourself.
 - Find someone who you admire and aspire to. Note what specifically it is that you admire. Find a way to emulate that person and their qualities today in some way.
 - Find out more about your parents and their upbringing. Attempt to understand more of who they are, their values and what they hold as important and why. Relate to a family member in a new, more positive and compassionate way today.
 - Write down your own ideas and insights for acting on.
-
- Email your specific action ideas to share with the Janelle community to janelle@janellefletcher.com Subject line – Comparisons feedback. Your ideas and insights can help others enjoy a far greater life!

Affirmation – affirm me

- I compare myself only in the light of developing myself.
- I respond rather than react to others' criticism, judgement and comparisons.
- I am perfect as I am and I play my unique part in contributing to the world.
- Write your own.

Having done some reflection and taken some action send your personal success story to janelle@janellefletcher.com Subject line – My success story. You will be entered into the monthly draw to win an individualised coaching consultation with Janelle.