

INTRO: This is the Elegant Warrior Podcast. It's the podcast about elegance in all of its forms. We're talking about our definitions of elegance and how we maintain it in times of trial. We're also talking about how we can advocate for ourselves with elegance and in a way that makes us most likely to win. I'm your host. Heather Hansen: author, speaker, consultant, trainer and self advocacy expert.

Let's talk elegance.

HEATHER HANSEN: Hello, my elegant warriors. Today's podcast is all about judgment and specifically three ways to avoid being judged. Because I actually think the idea of being judged is one of our greatest fears, and it holds us back from our greatest dreams. And if we could stop being judged, or stop being afraid of being judged, we would achieve so much more. And as an attorney, I feel like I know a lot about judges and judging and judgment, and I've had a lot of experience with all of those things. And so I wanted to talk to you a little bit about those things and how we can sort of see our way around them.

About five years ago, I spoke at a bar association event. And it was a weekend long event, and I spoke in the afternoon. Then that evening there was a dinner, and then there was partying and, you know, everyone just sort of socializing and having a good time. And at the dinner, a judge approached me and she was one of my favorite judges, she's a judge that I had been in front of many times. And she said, "I wanted to talk to you because some of the judges think that you should run for judge." And in Pennsylvania, which is where I practice it is nom un some states and some jurisdictions, judges are assigned, Um federal judges, for example, are assigned there are nominated and assigned by our president. But in Pennsylvania, judges are elected. And so it's not as if these judges saying you should be a judge would be enough. I would have to run as a judge and be elected as a judge. But she wanted me to know that if I decided to do that, they would support me and help me through the process and they thought that that would be a good idea for me. And I was enormously grateful that they would even think of me in that position.

For most lawyers, being a judge is a dream. I mean, for many people, being a judge is a dream. It's a fabulous profession. It's something to be really proud of. I have the utmost respect for every single judge I've been in front of. But immediately when she said this to me, I knew my answer was no. I had no interest in it whatsoever, and I, even back then but more so today, I know that when an opportunity presents itself, I need to check in with my head. How do my thoughts think about it? Immediately when the opportunity comes, what kind of thoughts am I having? I need to check in with my heart, how does my heart feel about it? What are my feelings about it? And I need to check in with my gut, do I have that gut feeling that this would be a good thing for me? Or do I have a gut feeling that it wouldn't be a good thing for me? And for me, Immediately I had a gut feeling that this would not be a good thing for me.

And I sort of told her that in the moment, I've since had conversations with her where I've been more clear about it and she's been lovely. But when I think about why it is that I was so immediately sure that this was not the thing for me, a couple of reasons came to mind. One is

that I had spent 20 years as an attorney being judged. My job is to go in front of a jury and have them judge my case, and arguably me, as either the winner or the loser. And 20 years of being judged has given me a lot of insight on being judged. It has also probably led to some of my neurosis and also many of my strengths. Many of the things that I share here with you are the result of all of those years being judged. The way that we build credibility or the way that we present evidence is to be judged and come up as the winner. So I am grateful for all of those years being judged. But I knew for sure that I didn't want a job where my job was to judge. And I knew that without a doubt. And now when I think about it, why is that so important to me? You know how I am, I immediately go to the word. And so I went to the word judge and the meaning of the word judge is "to form a critical opinion of." And I don't want to be critical. I don't want my life to be spent being critical, constantly ascertaining who is right and who is wrong and looking for the black and the white. None of those things appeal to me.

The root of the word judge is "doom," and I thought that was interesting and certainly made it more appropriate that I would decide against that job. And again, this is nothing against those judges who are listening, who absolutely loved being judges. Another root of the word judges to "make certain to destroy." And the reason that I wanted to include that root is I think that when you spend your life judging or thinking that you are being judged, either way, when you're focused on judgment, you are making certain that you are destroying your dreams. And so that's why I wanted to spend some time today talking about how you can avoid being judged, three ways that you can avoid being judged.

SPONSOR: And now we're going to take a quick break for a word from our sponsor: Our sponsor today is me. So if you've been a longtime listener, you know that Boils Natural has been a sponsor of the podcast since our inception, and they've been a beautiful sponsor. And recently, as the podcast continues to grow and I'm so grateful to all of you as you continue to share it and it continues to reach the top 100, sometimes often top 200, of podcasts in the career division on Apple. More and more people approach me wanting to sponsor the podcast. And they'll send me their products. And to be honest, you know, I test the products. I like the products, but I'm not sure that the products are going to work for you. I'm not sure that the products are consistent with me. You know, if it was something that I used all the time, it would be a different story. And so I started to think about how important it is to me to be credible with you.

And as a result, I started to think that it made sense for me to sponsor this podcast. And what I want to talk to you about in that sponsorship is that I do keynote speaking for companies, for businesses, for associations for groups. And so, if you're in any of those roles and you're looking for a keynote speaker to come in and teach you how to advocate for your ideas, for change, for your product, for sales, I would love if you would consider me to do that. In my keynotes, I talk about the five C's of an advocate, and I teach you how to create credible connections with curiosity and compassion. When you put these together and you use them, they apply to anything.

I have done keynote speeches for people like Google, LVMH, which is Louis Vuitton Moet Hennessy, various real estate companies. I've done that for Save a Tree, which is a landscaping company. I've done them for doctors, for lawyers, for insurance companies and insurance associations, for teachers associations. And so, if you are a leader, I can give you this keynote in order to help you to advocate for your team, for your ideas and for change. And if you are in sales, I can give you this keynote to teach you how to advocate for your product. And if you are just a human being who wants to advocate for your ideas, and your potential, this keynote applies to you as well.

So if you're interested in that, there's a link in the show notes for you to get in a call with me and we can figure out how to make that work. I promise you, this is life changing stuff. The testimonials that I have and I can share with you are evidence of that. And it is my favorite thing to do. Now back to the regularly scheduled programming.

HEATHER HANSEN: But I also wanted to give you some other words, because judgment can sometimes be a good thing. You know, you want to have good judgment, you want to make decisions using good judgment. And so I started down a rabbit hole of looking for words that felt better to me than judgment did. And I came up with some words that I really like that I had never heard before. One is perspicacity, perspicacity, P-E-R-S-P-I-C-A-C-I-T-Y. And the definition of that word is “the ability to understand.” Now I love that word, and I'm going to work to use it in sentences, perspicacity, because it reminds me of perspective. And I think that in order to understand in order to have good judgment, if you like that word, you have to have perspicacity, perspective.

Another word that came up in my search was sagacity, S-A-G-A-C-I-T-Y. And that is also “the ability to understand,” it has the same root as the word sage. And I liked that word as well. But my favorite word, and a word that many of you probably know is discernment, “the ability to discern.” And I think one of the reasons I like that word so well is that there is also a verb that goes with it, you know, judge and judgment and discern and discernment. But the meaning of the word discern is also “the ability to understand” and the root of the word discern is “to sift.” I always imagine sort of sifting for gold and you go through something and you throw away some parts and you keep what works for you, you keep the gold. And I prefer that over the idea of judging, over the idea of forming a critical opinion of. So discerning, discernment, discerning is something that I am going to aim towards whenever I want to make a decision. I think for me, discerning is better than judging.

But as I was thinking about judgment, I think that for the people that I coach and the audiences that I speak for and the groups that I train, most people are not afraid of failing. They're afraid of being judged for failing. That's what rejection is right? It's that you are judged and you came up lacking. That's what losing is in the courtroom. It's being, it's having been judged and coming up, lacking, coming up worse. And so I think that the fear of failure and the fear of loss and the fear of rejection is all about a fear of judgment. And in the courtroom you get used to it. You know what happens so often, your job every day is to be judged. Your job every day is to put yourself out for wins and losses. And at the beginning of my career, and for most of the time that I was

trying cases, I thought of the judging and the winning and the losing as being all about me. That the jury was judging me. And then if I lost, it was me that lost. When we won, I tended to attribute that to the client, the case, the evidence. But the loss was that the jury had judged me and I came up lacking. And so that isn't a very healthy way to live. And I think that's the way that many of you live. I think many of you look at your lives, and if you don't get what you want, you think that you've been judged and that you've come up on the bad end of that judgment. And so I wanted to give you three ways to avoid being judged in general in your lives.

The first, I've talked about this before on the podcast but it bears repeating, one way that you can avoid being judged is to never try anything. And it reminds me of the story that I've shared here before, where after my first loss, was also one of my biggest losses, when I finally licked my wounds and went back to the office, an attorney that I was friendly with called me and he said that he had heard about the loss and he said, "Heather, remember, if you're not losing, you're not trying." And that is something that I've always remembered and it's absolutely true. You can avoid losing by never trying, and you can avoid being judged by never trying as well. But actually, as I thought about that more, you can actually be judged for not trying. You know, it's one way to be judged less often. If you don't try, there's less opportunities for being judged. But there's probably somebody out there that's looking at you and saying, "Wow, that person really doesn't try. That person really doesn't give it their all. That person really isn't out there in the arena." And that's just another judgment. And so, yes, you can decrease the number of times that you are judged if you just don't try, but you run the risk of being judged for not trying.

And I would rather be judged for trying than for not trying. I would rather be judged for the things that I am willing to try, because I was thinking about this and the fact that, you know, one could say that by pulling back on trying cases, I stopped trying. But there's certainly people that would judge me for that, judge me for giving up a very lucrative, very successful career in the law for trying something new. And so, people are going to judge you for all kinds of things. And I think that if you choose to try, you are going to be judged for things that are more worthy. And so while that is a way to avoid being judged, to try fewer and fewer things, it is not the way that I have chosen.

Another way to avoid being judged is to recognize that no one can ever judge you. You know, one of the things that I had to recognize in the case is that it really wasn't about me. It was about the whole case. It was about all of the evidence. All of the witnesses. All of the questions. It was about the sum total of everything that the jury was judging on. And they weren't judging on me. In fact, what I had to recognize is that no jury could ever truly judge me. Because a case is a combination of circumstances and I am incapable of being judged, because no one will ever know my complete combination of circumstances. If someone wants to judge me for staying in the law, leaving the law, trying, not trying, they will never know my complete set of circumstances. And so they can never truly judge me because they can never truly understand all of the things that went into those decisions.

There's also the point that different juries make different judgments. You know, I one time had a case that was a mistrial, so the jury could not come to a conclusion. They went back to

deliberate and they deliberated for days, and ultimately they said that they could not come to a conclusion. And we talked to that jury and that jury, one of the things they told me was that they didn't like my expert. And so when I re-tried that case, which is what we do after a mistrial. My temptation was to try to get a different expert, but I liked my expert, and I knew that his opinion was sound and I agreed with his opinion. And so I put that same expert on when we re-tried the case, and we won that case very quickly. And when I talked to that jury, that jury loved the expert, and that showed me that different juries come to different judgments. And so if you start living your life based on not being judged, you are running the risk that one particular jury that might not like you, whether that's your jury of friends, family, clients, customers, is not the same jury that would like you, that would want your product, that would want to hear your stories, that would want to have you as an employee or friend in a relationship. And so, when you recognize that it is not you being judged, it is a combination of circumstances and stories and evidence, and that every jury, everyone is going to judge you differently, so much of judgment is based on them. You start to realize that you truly can never be judged.

You also recognize that people are judging results most of the time. You know, when it comes to grades, people are judging did you get an A? Did you get a B? Or did you get a D? When it comes to a launch of a product, they're judging did the product launch well and whatever that means, or did it not reach the results that you might have wanted? When my book came out, you know, someone might have judged it based on book sales, someone might have judged it based on whether it reached a bestseller. My first book was an Amazon bestseller. The second book was not. People might want to judge that. People like to judge results. And yet for me, the way that I weigh whether or not something was a success is how I did it and why I did it. The how is, did I do it in my elegance? Did I do it with compassion? Did I do it with curiosity? And most of the time, other people can't choose whether or not that is true for you. Other people can't judge whether or not that is true for you. Only you can judge whether how you did it was how you wanted to do it. And so when you realize that, you realize that you really can't be judged.

And the same thing is the reason why. Why did I write that first book and why did I write that second book? Neither of those books were written to be a best seller, though I was delighted that they were. Neither of those books were written to be reviewed well, though I was delighted that when *The Elegant Warrior* got her beautiful review with *Publishers Weekly*. My "why" for writing both books was a little bit different. My "why" for writing the first book was because I wanted to get those ideas out to the world, and I loved books so much that I wanted to have a book. My "why" for writing the second book was, it was during the course of Covid, and I wanted the tools to be more tangible for people, the tools that I taught. And no one can judge my "why" because no one fully understands my "why." And so it's yet another reason that I can't really be judged.

And you have your "how," the how you want to do things. And you have your "why," why you want to do certain things. And no one can really know those unless you communicate them. And so therefore, no one can really judge you because they don't know your "how" and they don't know your "why." So that is another way to avoid being judged is to recognize that there are so

many things that you know that other people don't know that they can never completely judge. Because your case is a wide array of circumstances and evidence and questions and reasons that other people can't know or understand. And only you can, so only you can judge.

And the last way to avoid being judged is to judge less. You know, I always say, hurt people hurt people and scared people are scary. And I also think that judged people judge people. I think the more that you judge, the more likely you are to judge. And the more that you judge yourself, the more that you are critical of yourself, the more that you hold yourself to unreasonable standards, the more you do that for other people and the more judgmental you become. And so I think that, if we can really back off on judging others, judging ourselves, looking for things to be critical of, the more we can find ourselves less judgmental and the less likely we are to be judged.

So the three ways to avoid being judged is you can not try. You can recognize that you never can truly be judged, because there is such a combination of circumstances that people will never know, and therefore they can never truly judge. And the third way is simply to judge less. In this week's private podcast, I'm going to share the three Q's around judgment. And if you wanted, the three Q's are a question that's going to help you to judge less and be judged less. A quote that will help you judge less and be judged less. And a qualified recommendation that will help you to judge less and be judged less.

But in the meantime, I challenge you get out of the habit of judging, and you might find that you feel like you are judged less. I think that that is a really good way to find yourself less and less subject to being judged if you can judge less and less. I encourage you to try that out. I encourage you to reach out to me and let me know how this is working for you. You can either email me. Heather@elegantwarrior.com. Or you can leave me a voicemail, the number is 856-390-4831. I would love to hear from you. I would love to know how this works for you, and how much you want to reduce your judgment, both being judged and judging. And I would love to know how this works for you in general.

I will be back in a few weeks and in the meantime, take good care.