



Expository Counseling Training Center

Understanding and Dealing with
Hypercriticism in Relationships
(Romans 2:1-2, Matthew 7:1-5, 2 Samuel 12:1-7)

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I. What is Hypercriticism?

- A. To be overly judgmental or strongly disapproving of another person's attitudes or actions with some form of **harshness**, **irritation**, and/ or **impatience** presented by you in your evaluation whether inwardly or outwardly or both.
- B. To take issues with or declare someone's attitudes or actions as unacceptable or wrong with some form of **harshness**, **irritation**, and/ or **impatience** presented by you in your evaluation whether inwardly or outwardly or both.
- C. To thoroughly examine someone's attitudes and actions and find them unacceptable or wrong with some form of **harshness**, **irritation**, and/ or **impatience** presented by you in your evaluation whether inwardly or outwardly or both.
- D. Overall, it is to be **judgmental**, **disapproving**, and **insightful** about someone else's wrong attitudes or actions, while being **harsh**, **irritated**, and/ or **impatient** in the process whether inwardly or outwardly or both.

II. When or Why Does Hypercriticism Occur?

- A. Hyper-Criticism tends to happen when you detect your sin in another person and reject that person according to that sin, instead of dealing with that sin in your own life. (2 Samuel 12:1-7, Matthew 7:1-5, Romans 2:1-3)
- B. When you find that you are strongly disapproving, judgmental harsh or irritated or impatient as well as lacking peace in a circumstance until a person changes some attitude, word or action, you may be detecting something in them that you have not been paying attention to in yourself. (2 Samuel 12:1-7, Matthew 7:1-5, Romans 2:1-2)
- C. The more bothered, harsh, irritated, judgmental or impatient you are in relation to another person's sin, (i.e. unloving in thoughts, words or actions or lack peace) the more you may be detecting something that you have not been dealing with in your life. (2 Samuel 12:1-7, Matthew 7:1-5, Romans 2:1-2)
- D. This helps us understand why some relationships in a family are more difficult than others. There is hypercriticism involved in the lives of both parties. Likewise, this

helps us understand why some relationships in any group are more difficult than others. Those persons which we find hard to love may be exposing areas of our lives that are hard for us to face in ourselves. Knowing what particularly gripes us about someone else helps us to understand the weaknesses we have in our own attitudes and actions. (2 Samuel 12:1-7, Matthew 7:1-5, and Romans 2:1-3)

- E. This principle helps us understand why (all other things being equal) one child in the family is rebellious while other children in the same family are not. That one child may strongly exhibit the same weakness as one of the parents and be rejected hypercritically by that parent, thus fomenting rebellion. (2 Samuel 12:1-7, Matthew 7:1-5, and Romans 2:1-3)

(Insights adapted from The Heart of Man and The Mental Disorders by Rich Thomson)

Summary: Two people are likely to be hypercritical of one another or have personality conflicts even when there is no specific issue between them because they are seeing their own sin in another person. A person may ignore paying attention to one's own sin by being hypercritical (intolerantly critical) of another person for the same sin for which the person is guilty of in practice or in heart. Sometimes, it may be that one has the same sinful attitude but practices a different action which makes it hard for one to see that quality within oneself. Because you are looking at the action of the person but not connecting it to the attitude of your heart you are hypercritical of that person's action, not realizing that you share the same attitude. There are other times the person has the same sinful actions as you, but you have been ignoring those actions in your own life while focusing intently on that person's sinful actions and being hypercritical of that person's sinful actions. This is more properly understood as detection and rejection rather than projection. One detects one's own weakness in another and is intolerant of it to the degree to which one excuses it in one's own life. (Romans 2:1-2, Matthew 7:1-5 and 2 Samuel 12:1-7)

III. How Do We Deal with Hypercriticism? (Proverbs 28:13-14, Matthew 7:1-5)

- A. Identify the people in your life that you find most difficult to love and or to get along with.
- B. Write down the things that most irritate you, gripe you, and leads to your impatient in relation to the people you find most difficult to love and or to get along with.

- C. Write down the areas of attitudes and actions that you are the most judgmental, the most disapproving of and the most insightful, in relation to the people you find most difficult to love and or to get along with.

- D. Ask someone who knows you very well and that you are willing to listen to, if you practice any of those attitudes and actions that you are the most judgmental, the most disapproving of and the most insightful about in relation to people you find difficult to love.

- E. Begin taking ownership of those attitudes and actions in your life and work on confessing, repenting, and replacing those attitudes and actions with the right God-honoring attitudes and actions in your life.