Judgments Into Questions

How could you do that? How could someone believe that? We often find those questions bubbling up when we're angry or frustrated by someone else's actions or beliefs. If we're being honest with ourselves, we usually mean it as a judgment, a question we think we can already answer. *You do that because you're selfish. You believe that because you're xenophobic.* However, there's a deep kernel of truth that prompted the question in the first place: unless we believe that these people are simply and irrevocably terrible, then there is clearly something in their actions or beliefs that we don't yet actually understand.

The questions below walk us through a process of gently interrogating our own judgments and assumptions, trying to turn it all inside out just enough to identify more complicated answers.

The purpose of this exercise is not:	**The purpose of this exercise is:**
● To force ourselves to forgive bad behaviors; ● To excuse belief systems that we see as hurtful to others or in some other way unacceptable.	● To be able to see others' actions from more angles, in order to have more ways to process what those actions mean for us (and for us to then be able to access more reactions than anger or frustration or sadness); ● To strategically be able to better identify someone else's needs and concerns so that you can organize them and bring them into your social justice work.

Exercise: Judgments Into Questions	
Identify my "How could you…" question. If I'm being honest with myself, what's the judgment at the core of that question (i.e. why do I actually think that person did/believes that)?	
How does this judgment serve me?	How does this judgment limiting to me?
How is that judgment locking me into patterns of assumption that I should try and open up?	
What unmet needs might be under how that person got to that action/belief?	What are the other potential answers to the question "How could you… ?"
How can I use this new understanding to either work towards my own benefit or the benefit of the issues I care about?	