

Contempt Is the Most Contemptible Emotion

There's a downside to self-development: it can be very easy to start developing contempt for the people you're passing.

People who don't go to the gym start to look like slobs. You* start to judge people who watch TV instead of doing creative work. You condemn people who spend more money than they make.

Of course, you notice this contempt *just* as you are beginning to improve. You forget that hardly a moment ago you were in the shoes of the people you find contemptible.

You used to not know a barbell from a bellhop. You used to watch TV for much of your waking (non-school) hours. You ran up a credit card balance just last year – one that you're still trying to pay off.

Your contempt isn't just a cause of memory loss – it is a pernicious lie. You were *just* recently the same way these people are now. You didn't lock yourself in a category of shame or judgment then, so why are you doing it to them?

You still have many contemptible elements about yourself that you don't judge yourself for. You still haven't started going to the gym *really* consistently. You still wake up at 8:30 (or later) sometimes. You're still late for things.

What makes you think you have any right to judge? Your contempt is hypocritical. What's more – it's cowardly avoidance of responsibility.

When you dwell on your contempt for others, you're just shifting your responsibility. Instead of dealing with the root of your own self-loathing, you project your self-loathing onto others. You take the small self-improvement you've done and immediately use it as a weapon. Instead of facing your own weakness, you seek out weakness in others.

Maybe feelings of contempt are inevitable. Maybe they're part of the path of overcoming our own insecurities and faults and failures. **But it's not inevitable that we have to indulge in contempt.**

If you are on the path of self-improvement, contempt will bring you low. Watch for it, notice it, remember its toxicity, and move past it. If you keep your eyes ahead (and remember where you started from), you won't have much mental space for it.

*And by "you" I mean "I." These are faults of mine.