

### Some Factors Counseling Belief or Disbelief

1. What are the logical ramifications of the statement? Are any of them inconsistent with my perceived reality?
2. What is the source of the statement?
  - a. Has he/she/it lied to or misled me before?
  - b. Has it been a reliable source of guidance before?
  - c. If true, is it likely the speaker would know about it, or would it be hidden? (Does the speaker have better sources of knowledge than I do?)
  - d. Do I have a preconception for/against believing that source? Is it sound?
3. What is the form or presentation of the statement?
  - a. Does it appear to be a simple, unadorned, offhand comment, or a carefully planned assertion?
  - b. Is the language objective, or "loaded"?
  - c. Are any of the terms unnecessarily obscure, or more ambiguous than they appear at first?
  - d. Does it seem to be specifically directed at convincing me? Why would that be?
  - e. Does it appear in a context in which accurate statements are usually found (*e.g.*, an encyclopedia) or not (*e.g.*, a political debate)?
  - f. Does it bear indications of reliability (attribution, format, language) that can be tested?
  - g. Does it bear indications of reliability *that fail to meet verification tests*?
4. Can I see a likely motivation for making the statement *if it is true*?
  - a. For instance, is it something that a person with direct knowledge would normally keep secret? ("Admission against interest") If so, was the person compelled to speak?
  - b. Does the speaker have an interest in informing, educating, or generally improving me?
5. Can I see a likely motivation for making the statement *if it is untrue*?
  - a. "Untrue," meaning a deliberate lie
  - b. "Untrue," meaning the speaker probably thinks it may be true but is likely not to care
  - c. "Untrue," meaning an honest mistake

- d. Possible motives, as to each of the above:
    - i. Personal (or corporate) gain
    - ii. Power (broad social power, or personal power over me)
    - iii. Fame/prestige
    - iv. Ego – desire to appear to have all the answers
    - v. Need to hide an unpleasant truth (avoid embarrassment, limitations on actions, prosecution)
    - vi. Part of a larger pattern (lied about something else, now has to lie about this . . .)
    - vii. Fun of tricking others
    - viii. Reasons unrelated to the statement but to the medium or context – "see, you can't believe what comes through this source!"
    - ix. Teach a (perceived) valid lesson (*e.g.*, myths, fables, cautionary tales) – the benevolent lie
    - x. Note, the motive may not be directed at me but at someone of which I have no knowledge.
  - e. If I can't figure out the motive otherwise, ask: who else tends to repeat the statement? In what context?
6. Is there extrinsic evidence either way?
    - a. Evidence of my own senses, or something else?
    - b. *How does that other evidence meet all these other tests?*
  7. Do I *want* to believe or disbelieve it? Why? How does that color my analysis?