

Congruency Questions for Teachers and Teachings (Woo-Woo Test)

"Is this for Real?"

From 38 years of questioning, questioning, questioning comes this congruency test for teachings in the human potential, metaphysical, and psycho-spiritual domain. It's called the "Woo-Woo" test after a popular term given to suspicious metaphysical teachings and would-be gurus. The assumption is that there is *real metaphysics* out there. There are sober teachings out there. There are sober, helpful, thought leaders and teachers out there. The "test" is to help distinguish these from the pretenders.

Right off, I assure you that the test isn't meant to judge the morality or righteousness of anyone or anything. The test is only intended as a helpful starting point to foster a caveat emptor attitude and a focus on conscious evaluation of stuff that comes our way. The Woo-Woo Test is shared here in the hopes that you might find it useful in your own evaluations.

So how do we test for "congruency?"

First, we look for harmony/alignment between all the ideas and tenets in the teaching.

Next, we look for harmony and alignment between the teacher/teaching and the intended outcomes of the teaching.

Last but not least, we look for harmony/alignment with the expression of love, the support of freedom, the support of self-empowerment and accountability, and the realization or expansion of joy. If you have appreciation for these values, you will probably also like the test.

It's a good idea to add to what's here with your *own* questions and required answers.

Please try it out when evaluating any teacher, authority figure, or teaching that you are considering giving your valuable time and attention to.

Of course, the test is not fool-proof. It doesn't guaranty that it will help you identify a waste of your attention. On top of that, it's worthwhile to note the possibility that within any body of work, *SOME* material might fail the test, while other material might pass with flying colors. You need to assess for yourself what is meaningful to you. This is a tool that you *MAY* find useful in that evaluation.

One more thing — and this is a tough one for some — the antiquity of a teaching isn't grounds for an *automatic* pass on the "right answer" to any of the questions. In fact, with

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analysis, we may find that current interpretations of some of the ancient teachings don't completely satisfy contemporary psycho-spiritual capacities and informational needs. We need teachings and teachers that are relevant to the times and the needs of the people living in them.

Of course this doesn't mean that all traditional teachings are suspect. In fact, it's even probable there are truths and insights we have yet to receive from (especially the more esoteric of) the teachings. Regardless, we are perhaps best served when we make it a standard practice that we consciously, carefully, consider why we *want* to believe something, and if that belief will work for us.

The Questions

Does the teaching empower you? Does it encourage self-accountability?

If no, or worse, if it requires you to give your power away, or blame others for your life, proceed with skepticism.

Are you coached to find your own way as part of the teaching?

If not, if you are told what to do 100% of the time, and urged to comply, then you could probably do better than this teaching or teacher. When anyone says, "You must follow me," head in the opposite direction. This is perhaps the most important of all the questions..

Does it make you feel lighter or "heavier?"

Does your chest feel tighter, or more expansive, as you read or listen to the material? What are other emotional/physical cues you are sensing in yourself as you take in the teaching? Bottom line: if the physical feeling you get when processing the teaching or teacher is emotionally heavy, consider an alternative.

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Does this material focus only on outcome (wealth, relationships, etc.)...

...or is there a balance of attention to PROCESS and to day-to-day life? If the teaching focuses almost exclusively on outcomes, with no attention to emotional wellbeing in the now, consider another teacher or teaching.

Will the practice of the teaching help you feel freer, or less free?

If you estimate the practice of the teaching will reduce your freedom, move on to 5a teaching that supports greater freedom.

Is it more about helping you expand, or more about increasing revenue for the teacher/sponsoring organization?

Take care giving attention to any metaphysical or spiritual “teacher” who puts the business *before* the message. It is OK and even wonderful for teachers to enjoy great success, but when the *work/message comes first* it's a good sign. If you agree, then think twice about an organization that requires you to constantly buy in with your cash *more* than your consciousness.

Does the teacher or teaching *require you to buy materials or solicit others to join the movement in order for you to succeed?*

Suggestions for resources are fine, as are classroom materials and workbooks, but if you are required to buy CDs and DVDs and bring relatives to meetings, etc., to “ensure your success,” then proceed carefully and with eyes wide open.

Is the work fun, and is there a sense of humor and fun in the teaching, or is it always very serious and/or “precious?”

The most effective approaches to personal and spiritual growth include healthy appreciation for, and inclusion of, play and joy in the process. Joseph Campbell

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recommended that we "follow our bliss." You may have a different perspective, but in my book, if there's no joy, there's no point.

Does the practice connect you with others, or emphasize your separation from others?

Anything that separates you from others by putting you in either a "more than" or "less than" or "more special than" position takes you further, not closer, from your connection with joy and expansion and all that is good. For example, if the teacher calls himself or you "more evolved" or "more enlightened" than someone else, then *you* are probably in the wrong place to experience more evolution or enlightenment relative to you.

Does the practice encourage appreciation and acceptance of others?

When it comes to diversity, why settle for "tolerance?" Tolerance implies a strategy to deal with an affront or challenge to our usual sensibilities. We can do better. Diversity is cause for appreciation. If the teaching or teacher denigrates others, and can't genuinely appreciate diversity, head for the door.

Is there an air of exclusivity to the group or practice, or are all comers welcome?

Is anyone seen as not worthy of joining this group, or are "outsiders" imagined as unfortunate if they are not *in your group*? If so, not a good sign. Great teachers understand that there are many paths, and see their own as but one choice among many.

Does the practice take sides, e.g., masculine against feminine; Democrat against Republican?

If the teacher takes sides, he or she is betraying a personal agenda that is far too parochial to have universal application from an inner life perspective. In other words, how can you expand in all directions, especially into one that is right for you, if when you do, you risk bumping your head on something your teacher deems as "bad" or "unworthy?" There is no need to embrace things that disturb you, but it runs counter to your expansion to judge, and especially to judge harshly.

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Does the teacher, practitioner suggest “elimination” of the ego, or is a healthy, transparent ego seen as an ally?

A healthy, transparent ego is an ally – a willing partner – but trying to “kill” or dispense with an unhealthy ego is not the same as healing it. The ego comes from the wellspring of our inner self, and is a useful part of our being. If your teacher or philosophy positions the ego as evil, or a problem, or to be dispensed with, then you are exposing yourself to oversimplification and misunderstanding of the nature of creaturehood.

The teacher or teaching may have other helpful points and even truths to convey, but you may disregard any nonsense that makes your ego an enemy. Instead, seek teachers and philosophies that can assist you with ego health, transparency, and well-being.

Does the teaching discourage desire, or does it support the idea that desire is an important ingredient in our ongoing expansion?

Nothing moves forward without desire. Period. Discouraging desire is reducing life to a slow form of suicide. The desire to eliminate desire is still a desire, so it’s really a futile effort to try and squelch desire, but still, some teachings have a go at it.

Nurture the desires that come from the heart, aligning them with beliefs and attitudes and emotions. Choose a teacher and philosophy that support those efforts. Any desire that promotes joy and freedom for self and others is probably worth checking out.

Do you have to push or pull or twist this to make the teaching fit, or does it seem like it was made for you?

If you are sitting in that chair at the seminar or listening to that CD, and you are *spinning* everything to fit you, it’s a bad sign. Find something that works and makes you go, “Yes! That fits!” This doesn't mean that growth will always feel comfortable. We know the difference between the discomfort of a growth direction, and something that just doesn't fit, don't we?

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Do the teachings feel authentic in emotion, or more like going through the motions?

Some would-be gurus don't "get" what they are selling, but are hoping you will buy it from them anyway. If you run into this situation, consider that you might find more authenticity elsewhere.

Is it a “closed system” or is it continuing to evolve and expand?

When you consider the teacher or teachings, it is generally not a good thing if you're thinking, “This is it, there is nowhere to go from here...” Look for ways the teaching allows for adaptability, and/or is itself growing and adapting to new knowledge and experience. If you can't find any evidence of this, know that YOU will probably move on, at least eventually.