

## The Game of Believing

Written by Nirmala  
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*Q: When I'm alone, just resting as awareness, my mind can feel so free, relaxing in not-knowing. Let's say I've spent four days like this, and then I'm with my friend. We talk and I become sucked back into knowing, and my mind feels more rigid. The conversations we have are always about what is not true. He believes something, but I don't. For example: We're driving in a car, and my friend says, "Oh, my God, imagine if we just crashed there. That would be so horrible!" What do you say to something like that when you don't believe it? And yet, because I still fear rejection, I might say, "Yeah, that would be gruesome!" Then I feel I was sucked back into that kind of knowing. I'm wondering what spiritual teachers talk about. Nothing you can talk about seems to be true. What do you talk about with your wife and friends when you don't believe things?*

A: The way I talk with my wife or friends hasn't changed except that there is greater ease with everything, including just sitting in silence. This means I'm willing and able to talk about anything, including the deepest spiritual stuff and also petty, personal stuff or even silly, ridiculous stuff. Whatever happens is fine with me. Even being bored by what is being talked about is fine with me. Boredom is not fatal!

Every moment is a wonderful opportunity to see how our being responds and how our ego responds. What a gift it is that you can spend time alone and drop so deeply into not-knowing and resting. And what a gift it is that your friends can still catch you up in believing something with their words. As you understand more and more about how this all works, you may find that you can be with your friends and continue to rest in not knowing, even as you are having a normal conversation.

The key is this thing we call believing or identifying. What is that? How do you believe or not believe? What's different? How do you know you believe something? You can say something you don't believe and know that you don't believe it as you are saying it, so just saying something is not the same as believing it. And yet when we or someone else says something, there's a natural pull to believe it also. Our awareness loves to fully experience thoughts and ideas, so awareness does this weird thing—it becomes those thoughts, or becomes identified with them. So we say we believe this or that. Identification is like dressing up for Halloween and forgetting we are wearing a costume. We hold the belief—which is just a costume—to be real. Isn't it amazing how we can see something happening but not actually experience it because we don't believe it? Or how we can believe something so strongly that we see it, feel it, and experience it even though it isn't actually here?

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Believing is not black or white. When you and your friend are talking about having an accident, you can believe it a little and experience some of the fear and drama of an accident, or you can believe it a lot and have a full-blown panic attack. Or you can hardly believe it, and the thought passes through your awareness without making a ripple.

Belief is one of the ways we interact with the world. It is not a mistake, and being takes great pleasure in all the different degrees to which we believe our thoughts. However, as your awareness of this game evolves, you may naturally be less and less interested in beliefs. Just as you have little or no interest in the games you played as a child, you may find yourself less and less interested in your beliefs or in believing anything. You don't need to play the game of believing to live your life, and you also don't need to give it up completely. It can be fun to go to a movie for a couple of hours and believe what you are seeing, although even that can get old. After all, there is a big and real and mysterious world of experience here that is not dependent on your believing anything. Why watch a movie of life when life is right here in front of you? Why watch a belief in your mind about life when real life is happening right now?