

The Believing and Doubting Game

"I can't believe that," said Alice.

"Can't you?" the Queen said in a pitying tone. "Try again; draw a long breath, and shut your eyes."

Alice laughed. "There's no use in trying," she said; "one can't believe impossible things."

"I dare say you haven't had much practice," said the Queen. "When I was your age I always did it for half an hour a day. Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast . . ."

Alice in Wonderland
Lewis Carroll

- ❖ When faced with an idea, especially a controversial or threatening one, people are quick to pick camps – the believing camp or the doubting camp. Whichever one they are in, folks tend to get real comfortable and even go so far as to completely forget that there is another game/camp. If faced with an adversary, people will remain in their camp most or all of the time. The two games are interdependent; they are only halves of a full cycle of thinking. They are yin and yang. Every player should play both games on the same issue.
- ❖ One of the most important fruits of playing the Believing and Doubting Game is the heightened realization that one is playing the game – that one is currently playing only one of two sides and that the game isn't finished until both sides are played.
- ❖ "Truth" is often appropriated by those with power, those who are getting paid, those who can shout louder or who can think a little faster, or by the master of instilling guilt, shame, and fear. Playing the game helps level the playing field.
- ❖ The main hindrance to the search for truth is probably the unwillingness to abandon a present belief and adopt a better one when it comes along. We may recognize it as a better idea, but it may be harder to believe, or may involve admitting we were wrong, or may come from someone we don't want to agree with, or may involve one of the scariest things ever – change. We all fear, to a greater or lesser extent, being taken over, infected, or controlled by a bad or wrong idea.
- ❖ Everyone present needs to play both games in turn. At one moment, everyone is believing, and when that is exhausted, everyone begins to play the doubting game. There is no division or sides while the game is being played.

The Rules

Doubting game

- Truth by seeking error
- Question every overt and hidden assumption and assertion
- To play this game is to be rigorous, rational, and tough minded
- Detach oneself; gain perspective
- Take things literally
- Be aggressive
- Be stubborn
- Be adversarial
- Discover all the problems and pitfalls

Believing game

- Believe all the assertions - even if they contradict each other. Get inside the ideas - experience what they are as much as possible.
- Do not toss the baby out with the bathwater - sometimes when one starts doubting, one becomes so preoccupied with finding the many holes in the tapestry that one fails to ever see the picture that is there.
- Settle for truth mixed with error.
- Never argue, believe everything, walk in others' moccasins, make metaphorical transformations of assertions so you can enter them. Get other people to join you and for a long time.
- Make the idea work – find ways to make it happen.

In practice, playing either side to the hilt can often grind forward movement to a halt, because the game degenerates into childish antics and assertions. The point is simply to take both sides of an issue and try and fully appreciate both perspectives. Easily said, briefly written, but difficult to do. Keep this paper in front of you as you play the game.