

What Is An Open Mind?

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What does it mean to "keep an open mind?" A look at the difference between an open mind and a gullible mind.

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An open mind is like an open well. It is easily contaminated by anything blowing in the wind. At least that is the problem with what many call an open mind. For example, you may have heard someone called open minded because he believes in visitors from space, bending spoons with mind power, and "remote viewing." But isn't this more a sign of a gullible mind? Let's look at a healthier definition.

Open Mind - A Definition

{bot_wrgoogle}We all like to think that we are open minded. Here is what that means according to a couple different dictionaries: 1. Receptive to new and different ideas or the opinions of others; 2. Not narrow or conservative in thought, expression, or conduct.

That sounds reasonable, and we might want to fit those definitions. The problem comes when we take this to mean that we must entertain any idea regardless of merit, or that believing in unlikely things is a sign of open-mindedness. Then we begin to give too much credit to faulty ideas and unsupportable beliefs in the name of having an open mind.

For example, I watched a program on crop circles the other day. These are circles and other geometric shapes of flattened crops that appear in fields around the world. For years many speculated that spaceships from other planets, "energy vortexes" and other outrageous things caused them. "Experts" claimed that they could not have been caused by humans. Much of the public bought into this hype in the name of having an open mind.

Of course when several individuals and groups finally claimed responsibility, and even showed exactly how they made the designs, they were ignored by many. Some people didn't have an open mind after all -at least not open to the most likely scenario. They wanted a particular answer (space aliens) or wanted the mystery to be maintained. To this day the tricksters make their designs only to have paranormal "experts" tromp into the fields the following day and proclaim that no human could have done it.

Note that being curious about the mystery, and speculating about possible causes is not the problem. Being "receptive to new and different ideas" is a good thing. Adopting beliefs without supporting evidence may not be, however. Being receptive to the idea that previously unknown forces can cause things to happen is open minded, but it would also be very closed-minded to exclude the possibility that there are more normal explanations - especially when the bulk of the evidence points to this.

So what does it mean to have an open mind? To be receptive to new ideas and to avoid narrowness of thought, certainly. But being open minded doesn't mean we have to accept ideas that make no sense, or adopt beliefs without any evidence or reason. And it has to mean at least that we are open to the possibility that the explanations we would like or which are more interesting may be wrong.

You have a brain that can analyze various possible explanations for things. An open mind may assure you that you consider all those possibilities, but it shouldn't prevent you from discarding those explanations without evidence in favor of those with evidence. In other words, it should never be an excuse to believe anything in the absence of good thinking.

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