SAH Discernment Guide

A Discernment Guide for Unusual Experiences and Spiritual Claims

Explore with curiosity and discernment

Some experiences stay with us because they are difficult to explain. Our Discernment Guide helps you separate what happened from what you think it means, check compelling claims, recognize pressure, and choose a grounded next step. There is room for wonder—and room to leave a question open.

A grounded note on Alternative Beliefs & Mysteries
Explore unusual experiences with curiosity and clear judgment. Check spiritual claims, separate meaning from evidence, and choose a grounded next step.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Free resource from Spiritual Awakening Hub

The SAH Discernment Guide

Explore unusual experiences with curiosity and clear judgment

Spiritual Awakening Hub · Alternative Beliefs & Mysteries

A coincidence stops you in your tracks. A dream feels unusually vivid. A teacher offers an explanation that seems to fit something you have never been able to describe.

You do not need to settle the meaning immediately. Discernment gives you time to notice what happened, consider more than one explanation, and choose a response that respects your wellbeing and your freedom to decide.

Use this guide when an experience, claim, practice or person feels compelling. It is a reflection tool, not a diagnostic test or a way to prove a supernatural explanation.

Start with three separate questions

What happened? Describe what you directly noticed, as plainly as possible.

What might it mean? Name your interpretation, alongside other possibilities.

What action is justified? Choose a response proportionate to the evidence and the consequences.

For example: “I noticed 11:11 on my phone three evenings this week” describes an observation. “Something is directing my life” is an interpretation. “I should leave my job tomorrow” is a decision that needs much more information.

An experience can be meaningful to you while its cause remains uncertain. The strength of a feeling does not, by itself, establish an explanation.

Six steps for a grounded response

1 Pause before deciding

Give yourself permission to leave the question open. If no immediate practical response is needed, return to it after sleep and some ordinary daily activity. Avoid making a major commitment while you feel overwhelmed, frightened or unusually exhilarated.

Ask: **Does anything actually require a decision today?**

2 Record the observation before the story

Write down the date, setting and sequence of events. Separate what you noticed from what you later inferred or learned from someone else. Record uncertainty honestly: “I cannot remember whether I saw the number before or after the message.”

If you are considering a prediction, record the specific prediction before the outcome. Include a time window and what would count as a miss. Avoid rewriting its meaning afterward.

Ask: **What could another person independently check?**

3 Consider alternatives fairly

List at least two other explanations, including an ordinary one where relevant. Possibilities might include coincidence, something you had encountered earlier, an ambiguous statement, a reflection, or an experience around falling asleep or waking.

Considering an alternative does not mean declaring it correct. Its purpose is to keep one compelling story from becoming the only story you examine.

Ask: **What would I consider if I had never heard the spiritual explanation?**

4 Match the evidence to the claim

First identify the kind of claim being made. “This ritual helps me reflect” is different from “This ritual predicts external events” or “This ritual treats an illness.” Each needs a different kind of support.

Type of statement	A useful way to assess it
Personal meaning	Does this interpretation help me reflect while leaving room for uncertainty?
Historical or traditional teaching	What do reliable texts, translations and historians actually say?
Claim about events in the world	What independently checkable observations would support or challenge it?
Scientific claim	Does the original research test this exact claim, and do other studies support it?
Health or treatment claim	Is there relevant clinical evidence, and what does an appropriately qualified clinician advise?

Testimonials can describe an individual's experience. They do not establish that the same explanation or benefit applies generally. A study of meditation, for example, cannot automatically validate a separate claim about psychic perception. [1, 2]

Ask: **Does the evidence support this conclusion, or only something nearby?**

5 Check incentives and boundaries

Look at how a source responds to questions. Check relevant qualifications, transparent pricing, cancellation terms and whether claims can be examined independently. Having something to sell does not automatically make someone unreliable; it makes clear evidence and boundaries especially useful.

Reasons to step back include:

- Claims that only this person can interpret your experience or protect you.
- Fear-based pressure to pay for urgent cleansing, protection or repeated sessions.
- Instructions to conceal the relationship or abandon trusted outside support.
- Treating every doubt or failed prediction as proof that you are resisting the truth.
- Pressure to ignore consent, relationship boundaries or professional healthcare advice.

Ask: **Am I free to question, decline and leave without threats or humiliation?**

6 Choose a small next step

Prefer actions that remain useful even if your interpretation changes: journal, take a walk, read the original source, speak with a grounded friend, or try a brief practice you can stop comfortably.

Set a boundary in advance if money or time is involved. Major financial, medical, relationship and legal decisions need relevant facts and qualified advice beyond a sign, reading or striking coincidence.

Ask: **Would this action still make sense if my preferred explanation turned out to be wrong?**

How this looks in everyday situations

Repeated numbers or synchronicities

You can use a recurring number as a personal reminder to pause. Keep separate the claim that it reliably predicts something outside you. If you choose to track it, record ordinary observations and misses as well as striking matches, with a clear stopping point. Stop tracking if it becomes compulsive or distressing.

An intuitive feeling about another person

A feeling can prompt attention and a boundary. Before accusing someone or deciding you know their intentions, look for observable behavior and consider what you can ask directly. You can decline contact without proving a supernatural warning.

A sign associated with someone who has died

You may find comfort in a song, dream or familiar object. You do not have to resolve its cause to acknowledge that comfort. Be cautious if someone claims exclusive access to your loved one and uses that claim to pressure you into spending or decisions.

Déjà vu, a vivid dream or an apparent out-of-body experience

Describe the experience before assigning a cause. Note whether you were falling asleep or waking, and whether it recurs or affects daily life. Some unusual sensory experiences can occur around sleep transitions; that possibility does not diagnose your particular experience. [3]

A convincing teacher, video or reading

Find the original source. Check what was actually claimed, when it was recorded, what was omitted, and whether the explanation could be challenged. Ask what result would cause the speaker to revise their view.

When wellbeing comes first

If you are hearing or seeing things other people do not, seek medical advice rather than relying on a spiritual interpretation alone. Such experiences have different possible causes, including medicines, illness and sleep-related states. [3]

Seek urgent help if there is sudden confusion, rapidly worsening symptoms, or voices directing harm. If anyone is in immediate danger, contact local emergency services. Seeking care does not require you to settle your spiritual beliefs first. [3]

Your personal discernment worksheet

Use this once for an experience or claim. You do not need to repeatedly monitor yourself.

The experience or claim I am considering

What I directly observed and when

The explanation I currently favor

Two other possibilities

1. _____
2. _____

What evidence would help and what could change my mind

Any pressure money or boundaries involved

One small next step and when I will review it

My current position

- I have enough support for a limited practical conclusion.
- I find this personally meaningful, but its cause is uncertain.
- I need more information before acting.
- I am stepping back or seeking support.

There is no score and no required answer. “I do not know yet” is a useful conclusion when it accurately reflects what you know.

Sources and further reading

The six-step sequence and worksheet are SAH editorial tools, not a validated assessment. These sources support the evidence-checking and health information within the guide; they do not validate supernatural interpretations.

1. National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health. How Do You Know the Information Is Accurate? — separating research evidence from opinion and testimonials.
2. National Institutes of Health. How to Evaluate Trustworthiness in Science — relevant expertise, study design, replication and peer review.
3. NHS. Hallucinations and hearing voices — possible causes and when to seek medical or urgent help.
