

So if I were now talking to a Scientologist, I would talk to them about these things:

Get them to explain about the powers of an operating thetan, the higher levels in Scientology. And then ask them if they knew of people on those levels getting sick or getting cancer or dying or just leaving the church. Get them to think how the reality they observe differs from what is promised, even for people who have been in Scientology for years. Tell them you are confused; if these magnificent powers existed, how then could critics of the church continue to write or even to exist? Couldn't a top level Scientologist just wish them away?

Get them to describe the ideals of Scientology ethics and justice and how Scientologists are supposed to be honest and straightforward. Find out if they know any Scientologists who won't pay back loans, who have trouble with paying their rent, who have done a lot of Scientology but still seem shady or involved in schemes. If they have been around awhile, they will know some or will have heard of many such things.

Get them to explain "having to have before you can do" and have them tell you about what Scientologists are told they need to do to before management releases the next "O.T." levels. Then wonder, if it is so important that these levels be done to ensure the hope of the future, why are there things that have to be done first?

Find out if they experienced the misapplication of Scientology justice themselves. Get them to talk about it.

Find out what they think about Hubbard's writings being revised over 15 years after his death. Does it make sense to them?

See if they will talk about their feelings that it is "just them" having trouble, but that Scientology really is good. It is very common for people to go for decades wondering privately why they are not getting the promised gains

from Scientology while outwardly defending it to the death.

These kinds of questions and getting them to think about what they experienced and observed as compared to what they are taught and led to believe are a key to breaking the kind of spell they are under.

So, I think that you should talk with a Scientologist completely nonjudgmentally. Get them to talk about what they have observed themselves in fellow Scientologists, organizations, management and activities as compared to what they are given to believe from Hubbard's writings and the promises of management. This way you open the door far enough that they will begin to read and compare the stories and experiences of ex-Scientologists with their own.

Once that happens, you can help them. But don't push it on them. And then by reading actual documents such as Hubbard's death certificate and the coroner's report and toxic screen, the depositions in court testimony, police reports in the Lisa McPherson case, etc., they can begin to form a picture of what they were prevented from knowing. And choose.

So how do you talk to a Scientologist? With care and understanding. They found a reason to be in it. Give them the space and time and resources to find a reason to be out of it.

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Pamphlet 224

How to Talk to a Scientologist

Michael Tilse

I think people are interested in why a Scientologist stays and why some leave, so I thought I would talk to you about it.

I was a Scientologist for 27 years. I gave them over two hundred thousand dollars of my own money. In fact, until earlier this year I still considered myself a Scientologist.

There is a lot of information that Scientology is destructive. Scientology has had to pay out millions of dollars to people they have harmed. Yet, as you may know, it is almost impossible to talk about these things with a dedicated Scientologist. I hope to give you some clues.

You might wonder how I decided to leave. After all, my parents tried to talk me out of it. My sister tried to talk me out of it. My friends tried to talk me out of it. None succeeded.

I wouldn't listen to anyone who tried to dissuade me from Scientology. I kept myself from reading critical news articles or viewing television shows. I never read critical books. I thought it was all lies anyway. I would have defended Scientology to the death.

So there are a few things you don't want to do when talking to a Scientologist.

Don't talk to them about the weird stuff. Most Scientologists don't know about it and are trained in the idea that finding out about it too soon will kill them. So just leave that entirely alone. It may freak you out and you may want to share it, but they will think it is a personal attack.

Don't tell them it is not a religion. A Scientologist will instantly tune you out the moment you say that. After all they have

subjective experience that is to them completely spiritual and religious in nature. To assert it isn't is to be calling them a liar and denying their own experience.

Scientologists invest a lot of their life and almost all their money in pursuit of the Scientology total freedom. I want you to understand that. Take myself as an example. Almost all my friends were Scientologists. Almost all my money went to Scientology. Up to 20 hours a week were spent at the church studying or getting counseling, even when I had a full time job. My whole life centered around Scientology and I wasn't even a staff member. For a staff member it becomes all consuming.

I felt that Scientology had saved my life. That I would otherwise have destroyed myself with drugs or suicide. I felt I had experienced personal insight into the nature of my own being through Scientology. It explained everything to me.

To tell me it isn't a religion runs counter to my belief, but more importantly, it runs counter to my investment. If it is not a religion, then what did I do with my two hundred thousand dollars and my 27 years of association and all those hours of study and counseling? I would have to admit that waste and I'm not going to do that just because you state, "It's not a religion."

Don't tell them Hubbard was a con-man and a fraud and a bigamist and that almost nothing he said about himself was true. A Scientologist can't believe that because he has been told that such statements are all lies. That the documents that show these things are fabrications by a shadowy conspiracy to destroy L. Ron Hubbard and Scientology and thus deny people the total freedom Scientology offers.

You're in a he-said she-said situation. In fact, without careful research you might be presenting false information that the church has put on the internet just so they can show their members how false it all is. So a Scientologist

will be sure you are now a tool of the conspiracy, out to destroy Scientology. And they will not listen.

Don't tell them Scientology doesn't work. For a Scientologist, it does work. They know it. They will be able to point out one or many times where they had a success or it helped them through something or they felt better about themselves. They may have past life memories that convince them of their spiritual nature. They can have experienced wonderful things.

In fact, I still feel that some things in Scientology help. It is one of the hardest things to get over and understand and I am still coping with it. Because a lot of the writing that Hubbard did appeals to one's better nature, to the idea of helping people, of attaining one's dreams. It is very seductive and if you have any success at it, you will attribute it to Scientology.

But I've been doing some research. And one book is a book called "Hypnotism" written by G.H. Estabrooks in 1943. In chapter three he says: "There is a rule in Hypnotism that everything we get in a trance can also be obtained by means of the posthypnotic suggestion. Also that anything we find in either can be found in autosuggestion..."

So I am coming to believe that almost everything that occurs in Scientology that a Scientologist experiences and believes in comes about as the self-suggested result of a kind of auto-hypnosis. Everything that seems to work or be positive is attributed to Scientology, and everything negative is assigned to personal failure or lack of understanding of Scientology, after which there is a long bout of study to correct the matter, which again is a kind of auto-hypnosis.

And any outside challenge to that carefully maintained trance will result in greater and greater resistance.

So how do you talk to a Scientologist?

First, you have to care. You have to care for them. Regardless of what you think about what they believe or do, you have to care.

Throw out any bigotry or intolerance you might have and be a caring person. Listen to them. Assure them you only want good things for them. Give them a safe place to visit or come to.

Many times Scientologists won't leave the church even though they want to, if they have no safe place or people of unconditional trust to go to.

It is a huge personal event to leave Scientology. You have to somehow come to the decision you were wrong and all that money and time and investment is lost. You have to be willing to lose your friends, maybe even a husband or wife or children. Few people can do that when others are telling them they were wrong. And really, what a person has hypnotized himself into can only be undone by himself.

Tell them that if they want to come and see you, just call and you'll pay their way. Don't say "leave the church", say "come and see me." If they call, send them an airplane ticket or go pick them up. And when they show up on your door step, don't be surprised, be supportive. Don't eagerly use their leaving to present them with stacks of information critical of Scientology. You can ask them about it, but they have a lot to think about. It can take some time. Give them space. Let them ask for information or let them use the internet to find out for themselves.

If they want to talk, get them talking about it. Have them tell you their experiences, good and bad. Talking helps, especially when the person listening is nonjudgmental.

It is the internal conflicts I experienced within Scientology that broke the spell for me.