**When Looking into Joining a Coven**

**What to look for:**

1. Friendly but curious toward visitors and prospective members. Most covens don’t do initiations until the initiate has been around the coven for a year and a day.
2. Willingness to explain the basic organization, beliefs, and activities of the coven. The basics should not be secret.
3. Theology and ethics- Do the teachings, rituals, and discussions enhance your personal beliefs? Or are they contrary to what you follow? Not all “covens” are strictly Wiccan.
4. Mutual caring and respect- Do members like and respect each other? Is there any cross-talking about each other?
5. Spirituality- Are people in touch with their higher selves? Is there an objective to become the best person one can be.
6. Knowledge- Do coven members seem to know what they are talking about? Can they answer questions clearly and consistently?
7. Health- Do members seem healthy and alert? Is there an interest in living a healthy life?
8. Fun- Is there laughter, singing, dancing, etc.? Do members enjoy each other’s company?
9. Organization and efficiency- Do meetings and rituals show preparation and run smoothly? Are meetings planned in advance? Is there a structure for teaching new members?
10. Shared Responsibility- Does everyone have a voice in making coven decisions?
11. Mental Stimulation- Is intelligent conversation promoted between members? Do members explain things well and thoughtfully?
12. Physical Surroundings- Are ritual areas and altar always kept clean? Do tools look well cared for?
13. Sharing outside activities- Do members share their outside lives with each other? Do friendships extend outside the covenstead walls?
14. Use your intuition- Do members make you feel valued and welcome? Do you feel good during ritual or coven activities? What about after?

**What to Beware of:**

1. Evangelism- Are they over eager to recruit you? Do they try to get you to commit before they reveal basic information about the coven, such as, beliefs?
2. Shroud of Mystery- Is everything kept secret? Are they unwilling to answer questions or do answers contradict or seem like “mumbo jumbo”?
3. Questionable Beliefs- Do you find their beliefs to be narrow, intolerant, or sexist? Do they have ideas you don’t agree with?
4. Disrespect of each other- Do they criticize each other? Do they use questionable humor to dominate conversations? Do they talk behind each other’s backs?
5. Authoritarian leadership- Do leaders have complete control over activities of the coven or their personal lives? Does it seem the coven runs on “blind obedience”?
6. Grim Solemnity- Does every gathering have a deep, dark, solemn atmosphere? Do they frown on merriment and are unable to laugh at themselves?
7. Dissipation or intemperance- Are drunkenness and drug use considered normal behavior? If addictions and poor health are common in a group and disrupt group activities this is a big warning sign.
8. Chronic Disorganization- Are members sloppy, unprepared, or indifferent about rituals or classes? Do they ignore of laugh off forgetfulness and inefficiency?
9. “True Believer” attitudes- Do members accept everything they hear from “authority” without question?
10. Spiritual Immaturity- Do members have shallow or childlike attitudes toward the Craft? Do they participate and promote hexes, curses, or “witch wars” against other groups or individuals?
11. Ignorance- Do members parrot phrases with the inability to explain what they mean?
12. Profiteering- Are there hefty fees for training or initiation? Are there no explanations as to where funds go?
13. Lack of teaching- Is there no clear system for teaching new members? Or is there a system that no one can give specifics on?
14. Lack of Connections outside coven activities- Do they not seem to see each other or talk to each other outside coven activities? Are there cliques that exclude other members?
15. Isolation- Are members/leader(s) uncomfortable or prohibitive of you visiting other covens? Do they avoid working with others in the community? Are they openly disparaging of other religions? Or people with contradictory beliefs?
16. Physical Surroundings- Is the altar area dirty or unorganized?

This list is adapted from “Coven Craft” by Amber K.

**Bonewit’s Advanced Cult Danger Evaluation Form**

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Rate each point from 1-10. 1 being low and 10 being high.

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| Internal Control: Amount of internal political power exercised by leader(s) over members |  |
| Wisdom claimed by leader(s): Amount of infallibility declared or implied about decisions or doctrinal/scriptural interpretations |  |
| Wisdom credited to leader(s) by members: Amount of trust in decisions or doctrinal/scriptural interpretations made by leader(s) |  |
| Dogma: Rigidity of reality concepts taught; amount of doctrinal inflexibility or “fundamentalism” |  |
| Recruiting: Emphasis put on attracting new members; amount of proselytizing |  |
| Front Groups: Number of subsidiary groups using different names from that of the main group |  |
| Wealth: Amount of money and/or property desired or obtained by group; emphasis on members’ donations; economic lifestyle of leader(s) compared to ordinary members |  |
| Political Power: Amount of external political influence desired or obtained; emphasis on directing members secular votes |  |
| Sexual Manipulation of members by leader(s): Amount of control exercised over sexuality of members; advancement dependent upon sexual favors or specific lifestyle |  |
| Censorship: Amount of control over members’ access to outside opinion on group. Its leader(s), or its doctrine |  |
| Drop out control: Intensity of efforts directed at preventing or returning drop outs |  |
| Violence: Amount of approval when used by or for the group, its doctrines, or leader(s) |  |
| Paranoia: Amount of fear concerning real or imagined enemies; perceived power of opponents; prevalence of conspiracy theories |  |
| Grimness: Amount of disapproval concerning jokes about the group, its doctrines, or its leader(s) |  |
| Surrender of Will: Amount of emphasis on members not having to be responsible for personal decisions; degree of individual disempowerment created by the group, its doctrines, or its leader(s) |  |
| Hypocrisy: Amount of approval for other actions (not included above) which the group officially considers immoral or unethical, when done by or for the group, its doctrines, or its leader(s); willingness to violate the group’s declared principles for political, psychological, economic, or other gain |  |