

## STRANGER INTERVIEWS

Most of us keep to ourselves and the one's that don't are often referred to as "extroverts." Introverts, those that gain energy in smaller groupings, however, are often the best at intimacy and are usually great in 1-on-1 conversations.

In some of my teaching, I ask my students to do "stranger interviews" with people outside their social / religious / age / race / gender constituency. 10 interviews with 10 strangers about the most important things in life. I ask some clients and especially those who want to broaden their horizons to do the same. These might be single men or women or those who have social anxiety.

My favourite series of interviews was by a man who interviewed 10 beggars on the Granville Mall. His criteria? They had to be beggars and they were willing to give him 10 minutes of their time to talk about intrusive matters for \$10. That's right, he paid them 10 bucks. (Others have put up signs in coffee shops that say something like "free coffee for free thinking.")

And I ask people in my counselling practice to do the same. "Talk to 10 people this week who are outside of your particular world and ask them 5 or 10 things." Here are some example questions (any question can be asked but these are illustrative):

1. Do you believe that you have a "call" for your life and if so, do you think you are living it?
2. What is the essence of your "you"; that is, how are you unique, gifted, valuable to your personal world?
3. What will "they" write on your tombstone (assuming you will have one)?
4. If you were to design a T-shirt, what would it say / show on the front and back?
5. Do you have a code of ethics – either formal or informal – that provides a structure for your life?

There are three parts to an interview. The first is "the ask" where you simply ask, "May I talk to you for a few minutes about things that are important to me?" This is pretty anxious for both parties but it is hard to turn down. The second stage is "the Q+R" as in question and response. Not so much answers to fill-in-the-blank, census-type questions, as responses to thoughtful considerations. And the last stage is "the wrap" where thank yous are offered and spontaneous emotions are experienced. Some people say things like, "This is the best interruption I have had all month."

So here is "the ask" – "Will you take an hour out of your email-checking / messaging life to engage a stranger with some of the most important questions of your life?"