

CONVERSATION AND WRITING QUESTIONS

1. For a person you loved deeply, would you be willing to move to a distant country knowing there would be little chance of seeing your friends or family again?
2. Do you believe in ghosts or evil spirits? Would you be willing to spend a night alone in a remote house that is supposedly haunted?
3. If you could spend one year in perfect happiness but afterward would remember nothing of the experience, would you do so? If not, why not?
4. If you were to die this evening with no opportunity to communicate with anyone, what would you most regret not having told someone? Why haven't you told them yet?
5. If a new medicine were developed that would cure arthritis but cause a fatal reaction in 1 percent of those who took it, would you want it to be released to the public?
6. You discover your wonderful one-year-old child is, because of a mix up at the hospital, not yours. Would you want to exchange the child to try to correct the mistake?
7. Do you think that the world will be a better or a worse place 100 years from now?
8. Would you accept \$1,000,000 to leave the country and never set foot in it again?
9. Would you rather be a member of a world championship sports team or be the champion of an individual sport? Which sport would you choose?
10. Which sex do you think has it easier in our culture? Have you ever wished you were of the opposite sex?
11. You are given the power to kill people simply by thinking of their deaths and twice repeating the word "good-bye." People would die a natural death and no one would suspect you. Are there any situations in which you would use this power?
12. If you were able to live to the age of 90 and retain either the body or the mind of a 30-year-old for the last 60 years of your life, which would you want?
13. What would constitute a "perfect" evening for you?
14. Would you rather be extremely successful professionally and have a tolerable yet unexciting private life, or have an extremely happy private life and only a tolerable and uninspiring professional life?
15. Whom do you admire most? In what way does that person inspire you?
16. If at birth you could select the profession your child would eventually pursue, would you do so?
17. Would you be willing to become extremely ugly physically if it meant you would live for 1,000 years at any physical age you chose?



18. If you could wake up tomorrow having gained any one ability or quality, what would it be?
19. You have the chance to meet someone with whom you can have the most satisfying love imaginable-the stuff of dreams. Sadly, you know that in six months the person will die. Knowing the pain that would follow, would you still want to meet the person and fall in love? What if you knew your lover would not die, but instead would betray you?
20. If you knew of a way to use your estate, following your death, to greatly benefit humanity, would you do it and leave only a minimal amount to your family?
21. Do you prefer being around men or women? Do your closest friends tend to be men or women?
22. If you could use a voodoo doll to hurt anyone you chose, would you?
23. Are there people you envy enough to want to trade lives with them? Who are they?
24. For an all-expense-paid, one-week vacation anywhere in the world, would you be willing to kill a beautiful butterfly by pulling off its wings? What about stepping on a cockroach?
25. Would you be willing to murder an innocent person if it would end hunger in the world?
26. If a prophet you have a faith in appeared to you in a series of vivid and moving dreams and told you to leave everything behind, travel alone to the Red Sea and become a fisherman, what would you do? What if you were told to sacrifice your child?
27. What is your most treasured memory?
28. Have you ever hated anyone? If so, why and for how long?
29. Would you rather be given \$10,000 for your own use or \$100,000 to give anonymously to strangers? What if you could keep \$1,000,000 or give away \$20,000,000?
30. If you knew there would be a nuclear war in one week, what would you do?
31. Would you accept twenty years of extraordinary happiness and fulfillment if it meant you would die at the end of the period?
32. What is the greatest accomplishment of your life? Is there anything you hope to do that is even better?
33. What was your most enjoyable dream? Your worst nightmare?
34. Would you give up half of what you now own for a pill that would permanently change you so that one hour of sleep each day would fully refresh you?
35. If you knew you could devote yourself to any single occupation-music, writing, acting, business, politics, medicine, etc.-and be among the best and most successful in the world at it, what would you choose?
36. What was your worst experience with drugs or alcohol?
37. If you went to a dinner party and were offered a dish you had never tried, would you want to taste it even if it sounded strange and not very appealing?
38. Do your close friends tend to be older or younger than you?
39. If the person you were engaged to marry had an accident and became a paraplegic, would you go through with the marriage or back out of it?
40. Your house, containing everything you own, catches fire; after saving your loved ones and pets, you have time to safely make a final dash to save any one item. What would it be?



41. When were you last in a fight? What caused it and who won?
42. You are offered \$1,000,000 for the following act: Before you are ten pistols—only one of which is loaded. You must pick up one of the pistols, point it at your forehead, and pull the trigger. If you can walk away you do so a millionaire. Would you accept the risk?
43. Someone very close to you is in pain, paralyzed, and will die within a month. He begs you to give him poison so that he can die. Would you? What if it were your father?"
44. When did you last sing to yourself? To someone else?
45. You have the power to go any distance into the future and, after one year, return to the present with any knowledge you have gained from your experience but with no physical objects. Would you make the journey if it carried a 20 percent risk of death?
46. Given the choice of anyone in the world, whom would you want as your dinner guest? As your close friend? As your lover?
47. While parking late at night, you slightly scrape the side of a Porsche. You are certain no one else is aware of what happened. The damage is minor and would not be covered by insurance. Would you leave a note?
48. If you could choose the manner of your death, what would it be?
49. Do you have any specific long-term goals? What is one and how do you plan on reaching it?
50. For what in your life do you feel most grateful?
51. How do you react when people sing "Happy Birthday" to you in a restaurant?
52. What is the worst psychological torture you can imagine suffering? Anything causing even minor physical injury should not be considered.
53. Would you like your spouse to be both smarter and more attractive than you?
54. If you found that a good friend had AIDS, would you avoid him? What if your brother or sister had it?
55. A good friend pulls off a well-conceived practical joke that plays on one of your foibles and makes you look ridiculous. How would you react?
56. By controlling medical research funds, you are in the position to guarantee that a cure will be found in 15 years for any disease you choose. Unfortunately, no progress on any others would be made during that period. Would you target one disease?
57. Would you add one year to your life if it meant taking one year from the life of someone in the world selected at random? Would it matter if you were told whose life you had shortened?
58. If you walked out of your house one morning and saw a bird with a broken wing huddled in some nearby bushes, what would you do?
59. Assume there were a technological breakthrough that would allow people to travel as easily and cheaply between continents as between nearby cities. Unfortunately, there would also be 100,000 deaths a year from the device. Would you try to prevent its use?
60. You and a person you love deeply are placed in separate rooms with a button next to each of you. You know that you will both be killed unless one of you presses your button before 60 minutes pass; furthermore, the first to press the button will save the other person, but will immediately be killed. What do you think you would do?



61. When you tell a story, do you often exaggerate or embellish it? If so, why?
62. Do you feel that advice from older people carries a special weight because of their greater experience?
63. Without your kidney as a transplant, someone close to you will die within one month. The odds that you will survive the operation are only 50 percent, but should you survive you would be certain of a normal life expectancy. Would you consent to the operation?
64. When has your life dramatically changed as the result of some seemingly random external influence? How much do you feel in control of the course of your life?
65. If a friend were almost always late, would you resent it or simply allow for it? Can you be counted on to be on time?
66. When did you last yell at someone? Why? Did you later regret it?
67. Would you be willing to have horrible nightmares every night for a year if you would be rewarded with extraordinary wealth?
68. If you could have free, unlimited service for five years from an extremely good cook, chauffeur, housekeeper, masseuse, or personal secretary, which would you choose?
69. Would you enjoy spending a month of solitude in a beautiful natural setting? Food and shelter would be provided but you would not see another person.
70. After a medical examination, your doctor calls and gravely says you have a rare lymphatic cancer and only a few months to live. Five days later, she informs you that the lab tests were mislabeled; you are perfectly healthy. Forced for a moment to look death in the face, you have been allowed to turn and go on. During those difficult days you would certainly have gained some insights about yourself. Do you think they would be worth the pain?
71. One hot summer afternoon, while walking through a parking lot at a large shopping center, you notice a dog suffering badly from the heat inside a locked car. What would you do?
72. Do you feel ill at ease going alone to either dinner or a movie? What about going on a vacation by yourself?
73. If you knew that in one year you would die suddenly, would you change anything about the way you are now living?
74. For \$20,000 would you go for three months without washing, brushing your teeth, or using deodorant? Assume you could not explain your reasons to anyone, and that there would be no long-term effect on your career.
75. Would you rather die peacefully among friends at age 50, or painfully and alone at age 80? Assume that most of the last 30 years would be good ones.
76. If you were to discover that your closest friend was a heroin dealer, what would you do?
77. Is it easy for you to accept help when you need it? Will you ask for help?
78. If you were helping to raise money for a charity and someone agreed to make a large contribution if you would perform at the upcoming fund-raising show, would you? If so, what would you like to perform? Assume the show would have an audience of about 1,000.
79. Would you have one of your fingers surgically removed if it somehow guaranteed immunity from all major diseases?



80. Would you like to be famous? In what way?
81. How do you picture your funeral? Is it important for you to have people mourn your death?
82. Which of the following restrictions could you best tolerate? : leaving the country permanently, or never leaving the state in which you now live
83. You, your closest friend, and your father are on vacation together, hiking in a remote jungle. Your two companions stumble into a nest of poisonous vipers and are bitten repeatedly. You know neither will live without an immediate shot of anti-venom, yet there is only a single dose of anti-venom and it is in your pocket. What would you do?
84. If you could choose the sex and physical appearance of your soon-to-be-born child, would you do it?"
85. Would you rather play a game with someone more or less talented than you? Would it matter who was watching?
86. Is there something you've dreamed of doing for a long time? Why haven't you done it?'
87. On a busy street you are approached apologetically by a well-dressed stranger who asks for a dollar to catch a bus and make a phone call. He says he has lost his wallet. What would you do? If approached in the same way by a haggard-looking stranger claiming to be hungry and unable to find a job, what would you do?
88. If by sacrificing your life you could contribute so much to the world that you would be honored in all nations, would you be willing to do so? If so, would you make the same sacrifice knowing that someone you thoroughly disliked would receive the honor while you went unrecognized?
89. What are your most compulsive habits? Do you regularly struggle to break these habits?
90. You know you will die of an incurable disease within a year. Would you allow yourself to be frozen within the week if you knew it would give you a modest chance of being revived in 1,000 years and living a greatly extended life?
91. You are driving late at night in a safe but deserted neighborhood when a dog suddenly darts in front of your car. Though you slam on the brakes, you hit the animal. Would you stop to see how injured the animal was? If you did so and found that the dog was dead but had a name tag, would you contact the owner?
92. What do you most strive for in your life: accomplishment, security, love, power, excitement, knowledge, or something else?
93. How close and warm is your family? Do you feel your childhood was happier than most other people's?
94. At a meal, your friends start belittling a common acquaintance. If you felt their criticisms were unjustified, would you defend the person?
95. You are invited to a party that will be attended by many fascinating people you've never met. Would you want to go if you had to go by yourself?
96. Since adolescence, in what three-year period do you feel you experienced the most personal growth and change?
97. If you were having difficulty on an important test and could safely cheat by looking at someone else's paper, would you do so?"
98. If you were at a friend's house for a dinner and you found a dead cockroach in your salad, what would you do?



99. If you could take a one-month trip anywhere in the world and money were not a consideration, where would you go and what would you do?
100. Would you be willing to reduce your life expectancy by five years to become extremely attractive?
101. Given the ability to project yourself into the past but not return, would you do so? Where would you go and what would you try to accomplish if you knew you might change the course of history?
102. Have you ever considered suicide? What is so important to you that without it life would not be worth living?
103. If your friends and acquaintances were willing to bluntly and honestly tell you what they really thought of you, would you want them to?
104. If this country were to suffer an unprovoked nuclear attack and would be totally obliterated in a matter of minutes, would you favor unleashing the nuclear arsenal upon the attackers?
105. Would you accept \$10,000 to shave your head and continue your normal activities sans hat or wig without explaining the reason for your haircut?
106. Were you able to wake up tomorrow in the body of someone else, would you do so? Whom would you pick?
107. If you were happily married, and then met someone you felt was certain to always bring you deeply passionate, intoxicating love, would you leave your spouse? What if you had kids?
108. When you do something ridiculous, how much does it bother you to have other people notice it and laugh at you?
109. Who is the most important person in your life? What could you do to improve the relationship? Will you ever do it?
110. If you could change anything about the way you were raised, what would it be?
111. You are at a lake with some friends; the sun is warm and the water is cold. Going into the water would temporarily chill you but you know that later the warm sun would be even more enjoyable and you would be glad you had gone in. Would you take the plunge?
112. Do you believe in any sort of God? Where do you think you'll go after death?
113. If 100 people your age were chosen at random, how many do you think you'd find leading a more satisfying life than yours?
114. Would it disturb you much if, upon your death, your body were simply thrown into the woods and left to rot? Why?
115. Which would you prefer: a wild, turbulent life filled with joy, sorrow, passion, and adventure, intoxicating successes and stunning setbacks; or a happy, secure, predictable life surrounded by friends and family without such wide swings of fortune and mood?
116. If you knew your child would be severely retarded, would you decide to have an abortion?
117. Do you find it so hard to say "no" that you regularly do favors you do not want to do? If so, why?
118. Would you like to know the precise date of your death?"
119. Would you accept a guaranteed, lifetime allowance of \$50,000 per year (adjusted annually for inflation) if accepting it meant that you could never again earn money from either work or investments?"



120. Do you ever spit or pick your nose in public? What about cleaning your teeth with a toothpick?
121. A close friend asks-and genuinely wants- your opinion about something, but your opinion is one that he is likely to find quite painful. For example, your friend is an artist and asks your honest estimate of his chances of being successful. You think he is an atrocious artist who hasn't the slightest chance of success. What would you do?
122. When did you last cry in front of another person? By yourself?
123. If, by having a 2 inch by 2 inch tattoo, you could save five lives and prevent a terrorist attack, would you do so? If you were allowed to select the location and design, where would you have it and what would the design be?
124. Someone you love deeply is brutally murdered and you know the identity of the murderer, who unfortunately is acquitted of the crime. Would you seek revenge?
125. Would you be willing to give up all television for the next five years if it would induce someone to provide for 1,000 starving children in Indonesia?
126. While arguing with a close friend on the telephone, she gets angry and hangs up. Assuming she is at fault and makes no attempt to contact you, how long would you wait to get in touch with her?
127. What do you value most in a relationship?
128. If you learned you would die in a few days, what regrets would you have? Were you given five extra years of life, could you avoid those same regrets five years hence?
129. Do you judge others by higher or lower standards than you use to judge yourself?
130. Would you be willing to make a substantial sacrifice to have any of the following: your picture on a postage stamp, your statue in a park, a college named after you, a Nobel prize, a national holiday in your honor?
131. If you had to spend the next two years inside a small but fully provisioned Antarctic shelter with one other person, whom would you like to have with you?
132. You notice a self-destructive behavior pattern in a friend who is clearly unaware of it. Would you point it out?
133. If you had the choice of one intimate soul mate and no other close friends, or of no such soul mate and many friends and acquaintances, which would you choose?
134. You become involved romantically but after six months realize you need to end the relationship. If you were certain the person would commit suicide if you were to leave and were also certain you could not be happy with the person, what would you do?
135. If there were a public execution on television, would you watch it?
136. If someone offered you a large amount of money for some information about one of your company's products, would you accept it? Assume you know you won't be discovered."
137. Do you consider yourself well organized? How often do you have to look for your keys?
138. If you could increase your I.Q. by forty points by having an ugly scar stretching from your mouth to your eye, would you do so?
139. Would you be willing to do something very unsatisfying (for example, clean toilets) for five years if you were certain that the experience would afterwards bring you a deep sense of personal fulfillment for the rest of your life?



140. What things are too personal to discuss with others?
141. How many times during the day do you look at yourself in the mirror?
142. Walking along an empty street, you notice a wallet. It contains \$5000 in cash but no name or address. What would you do?
143. Would you prefer to be blind or deaf?
144. How many of your friendships have lasted more than ten years? Which of your current friends do you feel will still be important to you ten years from now?
145. Before making a telephone call, do you ever rehearse what you are going to say?
146. You are leading 100 people whose lives are in danger and you must choose between two courses of action. (One would save only 90 people; the other would have a 50 percent chance of saving everyone but were it to fail everyone would die. Which would you choose?
147. If you went to a movie with a friend and it was lousy, would you leave?
148. For \$1,000,000 would you be willing to never again see or talk to your best friend?
149. What do you like best about your life? Least?
150. Have you ever disliked someone for being luckier or more successful than you?
151. When you are given a compliment do you usually acknowledge it or suggest that you really do not deserve it?
152. What sorts of things would you do if you could be as outgoing and uninhibited as you wished? Do you usually initiate friendships or wait to be approached?
153. If you decided to do something and your friends strongly advised you not to, could you do it anyway?
154. In a nice restaurant, after getting the check for an excellent meal, you notice that you were not charged for one of the items you ate. Would you tell the waitress?
155. Do you establish routines in your life? For example, do you usually sleep in the same place in your bed? Eat meals at the same time? Regularly return to the same vacation spot?
156. Can you be counted on to do what you say you'll do? What does it take for you to trust someone?
157. Do you feel you have much impact on the lives of people you come in contact with? Can you think of someone who, over a short period of time, significantly influenced your life?
158. Would you rather be happy yet slow-witted and unimaginative or unhappy yet bright and creative? For example, would you rather live the life of a brilliant yet tortured artist such as Vincent van Gogh, or that of a happy but carefree soul who is a bit simple-minded?
159. When you are with your friends, do your interactions include much touching-for example, hugging, kissing, roughhousing, or rubbing backs? Would you like to have more of this?
160. Given the ability to project yourself into the future but not return, would you do so? If not, would you change your mind if you could take someone along? How far would you go?"
161. Of all the people close to you, whose death would you find most disturbing?
162. You have arranged an evening with a friend, but on the day preceding your date a special opportunity arises to do something much more exciting. How would you handle the situation?



163. What has been your biggest disappointment in life? Your biggest failure?
164. You are given \$1-000,000 to donate anonymously to charity or to a stranger. How would you dispose of it?
165. In conversations, do you tend to listen or talk more?
166. Do you frequently find yourself-just to be polite-saying things you don't mean? For example, when you say good-bye to someone who does not interest you, do you act as though you enjoyed their company?
167. Would you be willing to commit perjury for a close friend? For example, might you testify that he was driving carefully when he hit a pedestrian even though he had been joking around and not paying attention?
168. Relative to the population at large, how do you rate your physical attractiveness? Your intelligence? Your personality?
169. Running too quickly on an icy sidewalk in front of a neighbor's house, you slip and break your leg. Would you be likely to sue the owner of the house if you were confident you could win the suit because of his negligence in shoveling the snow?
170. If you could prevent either an earthquake in Peru that would kill 40,000 people, a crash at your local airport that would kill 200 people, or an automobile accident that would kill an acquaintance of yours, which would you choose?
171. Would you be willing to eat a bowl of live crickets for \$40,000?
172. If you came upon the scene of a terrible highway accident just after the ambulances arrived, would you stop to watch? Assume that your presence would neither help nor hinder the rescuers.
173. If you could script the basic plot for the dream you will have tonight, what would the story be?
174. You are given a chance to return to any previous point in your life and change a decision you made, but you will lose everything that has happened to you since then. Is there a time you would return to? If so, would you like to retain the memory of the life you are giving up even though you could never recapture it?
175. Would \$50,000 be enough money to induce you to take a loyal, healthy pet to the vet to be put to sleep?
176. Ignoring all financial considerations, would you rather spend the next five years confined to the city of New York or to the environs of Morro Bay, a beautiful, isolated town on the California coast?
177. What would you like to be doing five years from now? What do you think you will be doing five years from now?
178. What important decision in your professional life have you based largely upon your intuitive feelings? What about in your personal life?
179. Would you like to be elected president of this country? Why? If so, would you still choose to be president if it meant that your sleep would always be very fitful and disturbed, punctuated by frequent nightmares?
180. If a crystal ball would tell you the truth about any one thing you wished to know concerning yourself, life, the future, or anything else, what would you want to know?
181. If you were guaranteed honest responses to any three questions, who would you question and what would you ask?
182. Which is more important: actual experiences, of the memories that remain when the experiences are over?



183. If you were expelled from the country and had only limited financial resources, where would you try to rebuild your life?
184. How much are you affected by a person's physical appearance? How would it change your life if something happened to make you much less attractive than you are now?
185. Do you find anything disturbing about immortality? What age seems ideal to you?
186. In love, is intensity or permanence more important to you? How much do you expect from someone who loves you?
187. If you were offered \$40,000 would you accept to continue your life without any electronic device?
188. What kind of people do you like to spend time with? What do such people bring out in you that others do not? What can people learn about you by looking at your friends?
189. Should it be illegal to help a terminally-ill person to die? If someone is not dying but has chronic pain, should the person be allowed to commit suicide? What if the person is in emotional rather than physical pain?
190. Would you prefer to die a hero's death, die a martyr to some great cause, die in a natural catastrophe, or die peacefully? Why is it so tempting to have death catch us in our sleep?
191. How forgiving are you when your friends let you down?
192. In the mid 1800s, had you been able to look into the future and see that the automobile would cause 5 million fatalities in the next century, how would you have felt about this new device? Is there scientific knowledge that is best left undiscovered? If so, what areas of research do you feel should be restricted?
193. Do your comments and suggestions influence other people much? How could you present your ideas so that they would have more impact?
194. Would you risk your life for someone close to you out of feelings of obligation or out of feelings of love? Would it matter if you could refuse without anyone ever knowing? What if the person asked you not to risk your life?
195. How would you like to be remembered after you die? What would you like said at your funeral? Whom would you like to speak?
196. Would you like to have a child much brighter and more attractive than yourself? What difficulties might result? How much would it bother you to have an ugly, stupid, or crippled child?
197. If you saw someone cheating on a test, what would you do? What if you had signed an honor code?
198. How might the world be different if you could actually change some historical event? How sure are you that the long-term consequences would be positive?
199. When you make a big sacrifice, do you tell people about it or keep it to yourself? What would you never willingly sacrifice? Your life? Your health? Your integrity? Your dreams?
200. Most people say if they found a wallet full of cash on the street they would return the money; do you believe them? Most also think their own lost wallets would not be returned; do you feel similarly? How do you explain this contradiction?

