



## CONVERSATION STARTERS

### Just the Facts

- What is your full name? Where did your name come from?
- Have you had any nicknames? Which did you like and dislike?
- When is your birthday? How old are you?
- What is your astrological sign? Does it have any significance to you?
- Where were you born? Where did you grow up? Where do you live now? Where else have you lived?
- Describe your childhood home and your neighborhood. Describe what life was like there.
- Where did you go to preschool, elementary school, middle school, high school, college, and graduate school?
- What do you do for a living? How did you choose your career?
- What are your hobbies?
- Talk about your grandparents and/or great-grandparents. What do/did you call them? Where are they from? What did they do for a living? What are some of your favorite stories or memories of them? Describe your relationship with them. Describe your parents' relationship with them.
- Who were your first ancestors to come to America? Do you know why and how they came here?
- Were you or any of your relatives in the military? Describe.
- What are your fondest memories of your grandmothers and grandfathers?
- As you think of your grandmothers and grandfathers, how do you remember them looking?



## CONVERSATION STARTERS

### Just the Facts *(continued)*

- Do you possess anything that was passed down from your ancestors? Tell the stories behind the items.
- Where and when was your mother born?
- Describe your mother. What are your favorite stories about her? What are some of her good qualities? How about her not-so-good qualities? How are you like your mother in both good and not-so-good ways? How would you like your children to be like her?
- What did/does your mother do for a living?
- Where and when was your father born?
- Describe your father. What are your favorite stories about him? What are some of his good qualities? How about his not-so-good qualities? How are you like your father in both good and not-so-good ways? How would you like your children to be like him?
- What did/does your father do for a living?
- How did your parents meet?
- Do you have siblings? What are their names? How old are they? Where do they live? What do they do?
- How did you and your siblings get along as children? What did you fight about? Tell some stories about you and your siblings growing up.
- Describe your extended family. How often do you get together with them? Who are you closest to? What stories can you tell about them? Who are your most colorful relatives?
- Can you tell stories of any famous or infamous relatives?



## CONVERSATION STARTERS

### Just the Facts *(continued)*

- What do you most appreciate about the different members of your family? What would you like them to appreciate about you?
- Who do you look like? What features of yours look like other members of your family?
- What did you do on family vacations?
- What is the best trip you ever took with your family?
- Do you have any special family recipes?
- Does your family play jokes on each other? What are some of the best?
- What were your family traditions growing up? Do you still follow these traditions? Have you introduced them to your own family? Have you started any new traditions with your own family?
- When you were growing up, what were the major holidays that you and your family celebrated? Describe a typical celebration. Talk about some of the most memorable moments.
- What holidays do you celebrate now? Describe your celebrations and traditions. Talk about some of the most memorable moments.
- How is the world today different from when you were a child?
- Do you remember fads from your youth? What were they?
- Have you ever been the victim of a crime?
- Were you ever mentioned in a newspaper? In what regard?
- What world events had the biggest impact on you?
- What are your most prized possessions?
- What are your religious beliefs?



## Just So Your Children Know

- What are your children's names, ages, genders, and birthdays?
- How old were you when they were born?
- Tell the stories from their births.
- How did you find out you were going to be a parent the first time?
- How did you tell or how did your partner tell you that you were going to have a baby?
- What few words would you use to describe each of your children?
- Tell some stories about your children as babies. What are some of the funniest thing they did and said?
- How did you choose your children's names?
- Are there any naming traditions in your family?
- Who do your children look like?
- Describe some of your children's "firsts" such as their first words, first steps, first teeth, losing first teeth, first day of school, first friend, etc.
- How do you recognize or celebrate your children's milestones?
- How do you celebrate your children's birthdays?
- What are your family traditions?
- How do you handle your children's disappointments?
- What were bedtime routines like when your children were babies? Toddlers? Older?
- What is the best thing about being a parent? What is the hardest? What is the most rewarding?



## **Just So Your Children Know** *(continued)*

- What three things do you hope your children will learn from you?
- What have you learned from your children?
- What makes you a good parent? How do you learn to be a good parent?
- What are your wishes for your children?
- What values do you hope to instill in them?
- What qualities of yours do you hope your children will have? Of your partner? Which do you hope they will not have?
- How do you discipline children? What are your beliefs and philosophy?
- What do you think your children are good at?
- How did being a parent change you?
- In what ways do you think you are a good parent?
- What parenting advice would you give to your children?
- What has been your proudest moments as a parent?
- In what ways would you change the way you raised your children?
- What 5 things must your children do in their lives?
- Do your children have chores? What do you expect them to do around the house?
- What advice would you give to your child on his/her first day of first grade? Of middle school? Of high school? Of college?
- What rules do you expect your children to follow?
- Who, other than you, do you believe your children can trust?
- When should your children be allowed to start dating? When did you?



## **Just So Your Children Know** *(continued)*

- When should girls be allowed to start wearing makeup? Get pierced ears? When did you?
- What are your thoughts for your children on education? On careers and working? On starting a family? On travel?
- How do you think your children should spend their summers? When should they get a job? When did you?
- In what ways do you think boys and girls should be treated differently? The same? In what areas do you have a double standard?
- What places should your children travel?
- Who would you like your children to look up to?



## A Little About When I Was Little

- What stories do you remember your parents telling you about when you were a baby?
- Describe your favorite blanket or favorite stuffed animal or other object that gave you comfort as a baby or child. What happened to it?
- What sports do you play? What sports/activities do you think your children should learn?
- How did you spend your summer vacations?
- What was your first job? What were your best and worst jobs?
- When you were young, what did you want to be when you grew up?
- Did you have any pets?
- Did you ever run away from home? What did you pack? Where did you go?
- Did you have a secret hideout? Where was it? What did you do there? Did anyone else go there with you?
- Who were your childhood heroes?
- What were some of your Halloween costumes? Did you make or buy them?
- What was the biggest trouble you ever got in to as a child? As a teenager? As an adult?
- Have you ever been picked on?
- Did you ever pick on someone else?
- What embarrassed you most as a kid? Was there a very embarrassing moment you can recall?
- What was your favorite music when you were younger?



## **A Little About When I Was Little** *(continued)*

- Did you go to concerts? What was your first one? How old were you? What were some of the best concerts you have attended?
- How do you handle losing? Describe a time that you lost a game that you really wanted to win.
- What did your parents do that embarrassed you?
- Did you ever have a friend your parents did not approve of? What did you do?
- Did you ever do anything illegal?
- Who was your first boyfriend or girlfriend?
- Who was your first love?
- Who is the first person to break your heart?
- Tell about your first date.
- Tell of a time that you went along with the crowd and shouldn't have.
- Tell of a time that there was pressure to, but you didn't go along with the crowd.
- Tell of a time that you deliberately broke your parents' rules. What happened?
- Tell some stories about your prom. Describe your dress, hair, your date, the evening, etc.
- How did you learn to drive?
- What are some of your favorite teenage memories? What was the worst?
- Describe what you were like as a teenager. What did your parents think of you?
- Did you feel understood or misunderstood by your parents?
- What did you think of your looks as a teenager? What do you think now when you



## **A Little About When I Was Little** *(continued)*

look at pictures of yourself from then?

- What's the worst fashion decision you've ever made? Clothes? Haircuts?
- Were you popular? What crowd/group/cliقة were you in?
- What did you do after school? What extracurricular activities?
- What were your goals?
- What music did you listen to?
- Describe how you spent weekends as a child and as a teenager.
- Did you have a curfew? What happened if you broke your curfew?
- What rules did your parents impose that you thought were unreasonable or reasonable? What do you think of them now?
- What did you lie to your parents about?
- Who could you talk to about personal things?
- Have you ever felt left out by your friends?
- Were you ever not allowed to do something that you really wanted to do? Did you do it anyway? What happened?
- How are things different today than they were when you were your children's age?



## Lessons Learned

- Where did you go to preschool? Elementary School? Middle School? High School? College? Graduate School?
- How did you get to school?
- Tell about some of your teachers who have had the greatest impact on your life.
- Did you ever get picked on or made fun of? For what?
- Did you ever get into any trouble in school? For what?
- Did you ever get sent to the Principal's office? For what?
- How and why did you choose the college you went to?
- What subjects in school did you struggle with? How did you handle it?
- Were you in a clique?
- How would you describe yourself in elementary school? Middle School? High school?
- Describe your favorite teachers.
- Describe the worst teacher you ever had.
- Did you like school? Why or why not?
- What kind of student were you? How were your grades?
- What was the worst grade you got and what subject? What did your parents say?
- What extracurricular activities did you participate in? Did you choose them? Did your parents want you to do certain things?
- What were your goals for your college education?
- What educational opportunities were the most significant to you? Are there any that you missed?



## **Lessons Learned** *(continued)*

- What advice would you give to your children when they were starting elementary school? Middle school? High school?
- What advice would you give to your children as they are applying to college?
- What kind of educational opportunities would you recommend your children take advantage of?



## These are a Few of My Favorite Things

- What are your favorite songs? Why?
- What is your favorite joke?
- Which would you choose: Pepsi or Coke? Coffee or Tea? Hot or Cold? Mountains or valleys? Snow or Beach? North or South?
- What is your favorite flavor ice cream?
- What's your favorite movie? Favorite movie quote? What are your favorite movie snacks?
- What do you put on a hot dog?
- What's your favorite book as a kid? As an adult?
- What was the best day of your life? What moments do you specifically remember?
- If you could only eat one food for the rest of your life, what would it be?
- What is your favorite dinner to cook? Favorite dessert?
- What was your favorite vacation?
- What is your favorite day of the week and why?
- What is your favorite color?
- What is your favorite way to wake up?
- What has been your favorite birthday?
- What is your favorite thing to do in the morning?
- What are some of your favorite places and things to do in your hometown or any other place you've lived or visited?
- What is your favorite curse?



## **These are a Few of My Favorite Things** *(continued)*

- What are your favorite places to visit and why?
- Which is your favorite season?
- Describe your favorite weather?
- What is your favorite place to be when you are happy?
- Where is your favorite place to be when you are unhappy?
- What is your favorite article of clothing?
- What is your favorite sport? Are you good at it?
- What is/are your favorite sports teams?
- What was your favorite toy as a child?
- What is/are your favorite book(s)?
- What things do you think you cannot live without?
- Who is your favorite musician?
- What was your favorite grade or year in school? Why?



## Heart to Hearts

- How did you and your partner meet? When did you meet? How long ago did you meet? How old were you both when you first met?
- How did you start dating? Did you have a first date?
- What was your first impression of your partner?
- What attracted you to your partner? What attracted your partner to you?
- When did you know you were in love?
- How did you first tell your partner that you were in love? How did your partner tell you he or she was in love?
- Describe something of your partner's that you wish you could get rid of.
- What interest or hobby of your partner's do you have absolutely no interest in?
- What are your partner's quirks and habits? What would your partner say your quirks and habits are?
- Is your partner a good conversationalist?
- How did you and your partner decide where to live? How did you choose your state, city and house?
- How are you and your partner's beliefs on politics the same or different? On religion?
- What do you and your partner usually disagree about? What do you always agree on?
- What do you do that your partner finds endearing? Finds annoying?
- What do you think of your partner's family? What does your partner think of your family?



## **Heart to Hearts** *(continued)*

- What does your partner not understand about you?
- What role does your partner play in his or her family?
- What qualities, habits or characteristics of your partner would you like your children to have? Which would you not like them to have?
- What makes your partner angry? What does your partner do that makes you angry?
- How do you and your partner fight? How do you and your partner make up?
- What are your favorite things to do with your partner?
- What are the secrets to a successful relationship?
- In your relationship, what do you and your partner do well? In what areas can you improve?
- How does your partner make you laugh?
- What article of clothing reminds you most of your partner? Does he or she have a favorite thing to wear that you wish you could toss in the trash? What do you love your partner to wear?
- What has been your favorite trip with your partner?
- What is your favorite photograph of your partner?
- Do you and your partner have a weekend routine?
- What does your partner do for a living? What do you think of your partner's job, colleagues, work, career, and office?
- Does your partner have friends who you just don't like?
- How do you and your partner spend a typical weekday evening?
- What meal does your partner cook that you love?



## **Heart to Hearts** *(continued)*

- Describe a time that you told a white lie to your partner to avoid an argument.
- How did you and your partner get engaged?
- Tell stories from your wedding. What went right? What went wrong? What would you change? What are some of the most memorable moments from the planning and the wedding?
- Did you have something new, old, borrowed and blue from your wedding? Describe your wedding ring. Who was in your wedding party? Where was your wedding? Who officiated? What were the best parts?
- Did you take a honeymoon? Describe it.
- After you were married, did you feel different? Did your relationship change?
- What gifts has your partner given you that you love?
- What gifts has your partner given you that you did not like? What did you do?
- What do you admire most about your partner?
- What embarrassing thing do you do to have fun together?
- Do you and your partner like to go dancing together?
- What are your favorite activities to do with your partner?
- What do you admire most about your partner?
- Describe your partner's relationships with his or her siblings and parents.
- Describe your relationship with your partner's siblings and parents.
- How many children in your partner's family? Which child was he or she? How does the birth order reflect itself in our partner's personality and behavior?
- In what ways is your partner silly?



## **Heart to Hearts** *(continued)*

- How would you describe your partner's personality?
- They say opposites attract. In what ways are you and your partner opposite? In what ways are you alike?
- Is your partner the type of person you always thought you'd wind up spending your life with?
- What is the best party you and your partner have ever thrown?
- How would you like your relationship with your partner to be similar to that of your parents? To your partner's parents? How would you like it to be different?
- How do you divide household responsibilities? Childcare responsibilities?
- How did having children change your partner? How did it change your relationship?
- In a long relationship, do you try to do anything to keep things new and exciting?
- How would you describe your partner as a parent?
- What qualities do you look for in a mate? Does your partner have them? Does he/she have qualities that you didn't think you wanted?
- Tell about your past relationships. Describe some of the things you have learned from them.
- What makes a successful relationship? What causes problems?
- What are the secrets to a happy relationship?
- Who did you date who was not your type? What is your type? What have been the "deal breakers?"
- Where and when did you meet your partner? What did you think the first moment you saw him or her? How did you know (s)he was the one?
- Do you believe in soul mates? Do you believe there is only one right person for everyone?



## A Penny for Your Thoughts

- Tell about any people who have taught you something worthwhile.
- Tell some stories that you think we should know about you.
- What is the most fun you've ever had?
- What makes you laugh uncontrollably?
- What is something you regret? If you could undo something, what would it be?
- Describe a time when you had to muster up all your courage to do something.
- Do you have a motto you try to live by?
- Have you ever had any recurring dreams?
- What are you afraid to do? What fears have you overcome?
- For what are you grateful?
- What makes you lucky?
- What is one of your most memorable experiences?
- How would you describe your style of dress?
- What has been your biggest challenge or obstacle?
- Other than your hometown, where would you like to live? Why?
- What is your definition of success?
- What or who made you feel jealous?
- What makes you feel shy, embarrassed or insecure? What do you do to overcome uncomfortable feelings?
- What were some of your biggest successes? Biggest failures?
- Tell about times when you really wanted something, and tried for it, but failed.



## **A Penny for Your Thoughts** *(continued)*

- What trip do you wish you had taken, but didn't?
- Who are you named after? What do you know about the people you were named after? What were they like?
- What things do you keep for sentimental reasons? Are there any sentimental items that you don't have anymore?
- What mistakes have you made? What did you learn from them?
- What five words would you use to describe yourself?
- How would your friends/family/colleagues describe you?
- What is the most important historical event to take place in your lifetime?
- What are some memorable events, perhaps without lasting historical significance, that occurred during your lifetime?
- If you had a free hour, what would you do?
- If you had a whole day to do whatever you wanted, what would you do? What about a week?
- What would you do if you won the lottery?
- What's unique about you?
- What do you do really well?
- What's one thing you'd really like to do?
- What values do you think are the most important?
- What have you learned from me?
- What are some of the most memorable (good or bad) times we have spent together? Describe.



## **A Penny for Your Thoughts** *(continued)*

- What is the best compliment you have ever gotten?
- What was your favorite age/time in your life? Why?
- What goal or dream have you not yet achieved? Why? Will you?
- What goals did you set for yourself that you did achieve? How?
- What is the best gift you've ever received? What would be the best gift someone could give you right now?
- Describe a time you had a difficult choice to make. Did you make the right or wrong decision?
- If you could ask your mother or father a question, what would it be?
- What do you do when you're scared to make yourself feel better?
- What do you know for sure?
- How do you make important or difficult decisions?
- Have you ever been able to help someone in need?
- What are your worst fears?
- What is the hardest thing you've ever done?
- What is the bravest thing you have ever done?
- What people in your life have had a significant impact on you?
- What accomplishments are you the most proud of?
- What is one thing you most want people to remember about you?



## Inside my Inner Circle

- Who are your best friends? How did you meet and become friends?
- Describe your friends from the different schools/stages of your life.
- Tell about three friends who have had the greatest impact on your life.
- Tell about any enemies or rivals you had. What did you learn?
- Describe your most outrageous friend.
- Who is your oldest friend?
- What is the secret to a long, lasting friendship?
- Describe some of the things you have learned from having friends and from being a friend.
- What makes someone a good friend? What makes you a good friend?
- Why are you and I such good friends?
- How do you make new friends?
- When have you and a good friend had an argument? How did you handle it? How did you resolve it?
- Have you ever been jealous of a friend?
- Have you ever disapproved of a friend's choices or behavior? What did you do?
- What is the nicest thing a friend has ever done for you?
- What is the nicest thing you have ever done for a friend?
- Have you ever been disappointed by a friend? Have you ever disappointed someone?
- Have you ended relationships with friends? Why?
- What out-of-touch friends would you like to reconnect with?



## **Inside my Inner Circle** *(continued)*

- Do you use an online service like Facebook to connect with friends? Who are some of the people you have reconnected with?
- Do you have friends of the opposite sex? Who? How are they different? Why do you think members of the opposite sex can be friends?
- Are you friends with your partner's friends?
- If you were having a small dinner party, who would you invite?
- Who have you recently met that you would like to get to know better? How do you go about doing that?



## Life with the C Word

- When were you diagnosed with cancer?
- How did you find out that you had cancer?
- What type of cancer do you have?
- Describe your treatment.
- How are you now?
- Did your diagnosis come as a surprise?
- Who are your doctors? What qualities does a good doctor have?
- Would you have wanted your doctor to do anything differently when he/she told you that you had cancer?
- How would you describe yourself as a patient?
- How has your day-to-day life changed since your diagnosis?
- What has been the biggest change for you since your diagnosis?
- What have been the most painful things since your diagnosis?
- Has there been anything positive that has come since your diagnosis?
- How have your family members changed since your diagnosis?
- What have you learned about yourself through this?
- What have you learned about your family? Your friends? Your spouse? Your children?
- Are you religious? What is your faith? Has your faith or religious beliefs changed as a result of your illness? How?
- What are your beliefs about death, heaven, and life after death, etc.?
- How has your illness affected your family?



## **Life with the C Word** *(continued)*

- What is important to you? Has this changed since your diagnosis? How?
- What scares you? How do you handle anxiety and fear?
- Do you find yourself thinking about your illness during the day? How often? How do you handle that?
- Have your priorities changed since your diagnosis? What is more important? What is less important?
- Since your diagnosis, have your goals and dreams changed?
- What do you hope to accomplish?
- How do you want people to treat you?
- What advice would you give to friends of people with cancer? To family?
- How have your closest friends handled your cancer diagnosis?
- How has your diagnosis changed your relationships with your friends?
- Do you have any friends who have or had cancer? How did your shared experience impact your relationship? How are you a good friend to her or him?
- What advice can you give about being a friend to a person with cancer?
- How can your family and friends support you?
- What are some of the most helpful things that people have done for or given you during your treatments?
- What are some things that you would not want people to do for or give you?
- What advice would you give to doctors and oncologists and other medical professionals who deal with cancer patients?
- What do you want or need from your friends? Partner? Family?



## **Life with the C Word** *(continued)*

- The medical profession thinks of you as a survivor on the day you were diagnosed. Do you consider yourself a survivor?
- What is your opinion on genetic testing? Was it or is it available to you? Did you choose to get tested? How did you make your decision? What advice would you give to others considering testing?
- How did you share your cancer diagnosis with your family? How would you recommend that someone else handle this?
- How did you deal with changes to your body? To your looks? To losing your hair?
- How do you talk to your friends about cancer?
- Did you ever feel angry or upset with your doctor? How did you handle those feelings?
- How do you deal with friends who try to convince you to try different therapies, diets or other alternative treatments?
- Have you planned for the possibility of death? Have you had conversations about death with your family and friends?
- Has anyone seemed angry with you about your illness?



## The Proust Questionnaire, and Then Some

- What is your favorite virtue?
- What is the quality you most admire in a man?
- What is the quality you most admire in a woman?
- What is your chief characteristic?
- What do you appreciate or value the most in your friends?
- What is your main fault?
- What is your favorite occupation?
- What is your idea of happiness?
- What is your idea of misery?
- If not yourself, who would you be?
- Where would you like to live?
- What is your favorite color and flower?
- Who are your favorite prose authors?
- Who are your favorite poets?
- Who are your favorite heroes in fiction?
- Who are your favorite heroines in fiction?
- Who are your favorite painters and composers?
- Who are your heroes and heroines in real life?
- What characters in history do you most dislike?
- What is your favorite food and drink?



## **The Proust Questionnaire, and Then Some** *(continued)*

- What are your favorite names?
- What do you hate the most?
- What military event do you admire the most?
- What reform do you most admire?
- What natural talent would you like to be gifted with?
- How do you wish to die?
- What is your present state of mind?
- For what faults do you have the most tolerance?
- What is your motto?
- What is your favorite word?
- What is your least favorite word?
- What turns you on?
- What turns you off?
- What is your favorite curse word?
- What sound or noise do you love?
- What sound or noise do you hate?
- What profession other than your own would you like to attempt?
- What profession would you not like to attempt?
- If Heaven exists, what would you like to hear God say when you arrive at the Pearly Gates?