



The 36 Questions that lead to love

Based on research by Arthur Aron (and colleagues) in 1997 at
Stony Brook University in New York.*

Set I: Light & Engaging (Building Comfort)

*These questions start with self-disclosure to establish
connection and ease into conversation.*

1. Given the choice of anyone in the world, whom would you want as a dinner guest?
2. Would you like to be famous? In what way?
3. Before making a telephone call, do you ever rehearse what you are going to say? Why?
4. What would constitute a “perfect” day for you?
5. When did you last sing to yourself? To someone else?
6. If you were able to live to the age of 90 and retain either the mind or body of a 30-year-old for the last 60 years of your life, which would you want?
7. Do you have a secret hunch about how you will die?
8. Name three things you and your partner appear to have in common.
9. For what in your life do you feel most grateful?
10. If you could change anything about the way you were raised, what would it be?
11. Take four minutes and tell your partner your life story in as much detail as possible.
12. If you could wake up tomorrow having gained any one quality or ability, what would it be?

Set II: Deepening Connection (Personal & Emotional Insight)

*These questions push toward greater personal
meaning and values, encouraging vulnerability.*

13. If a crystal ball could tell you the truth about yourself, your life, the future or anything else, what would you want to know?
14. Is there something that you’ve dreamed of doing for a long time? Why haven’t you done it?
15. What is the greatest accomplishment of your life?
16. What do you value most in a friendship?
17. What is your most treasured memory?
18. What is your most terrible memory?
19. If you knew that in one year you would die suddenly, would you change anything about the way you are now living? Why?
20. What does friendship mean to you?
21. What roles do love and affection play in your life?
22. Alternate sharing something you consider a positive characteristic of your partner. Share a total of five items.
23. How close and warm is your family? Do you feel your childhood was happier than most other people’s?
24. How do you feel about your relationship with your mother?





Set III: Vulnerability & Intimacy (Emotional Exposure & Trust-Building)

These final questions encourage mutual openness and emotional trust, strengthening the bond between participants.

25. Make three true “we” statements each. For instance, “We are both in this room feeling ... “
26. Complete this sentence: “I wish I had someone with whom I could share ... “
27. If you were going to become a close friend with your partner, please share what would be important for him or her to know.
28. Tell your partner what you like about them; be very honest this time, saying things that you might not say to someone you’ve just met.
29. Share with your partner an embarrassing moment in your life.
30. When did you last cry in front of another person? By yourself?
31. Tell your partner something that you like about them already.
32. What, if anything, is too serious to be joked about?
33. 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?
34. 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? Why?
35. Of all the people in your family, whose death would you find most disturbing? Why?
36. Share a personal problem and ask your partner’s advice on how he or she might handle it. Also, ask your partner to reflect back to you how you seem to be feeling about the problem you have chosen.

Final Step: Four Minutes of Eye Contact

The original study included an optional four-minute period of sustained eye contact, which enhanced feelings of connection even further.

Bringing These Questions Into Your Coaching & Facilitation

I’ve personally used these questions, sometimes in their original form, sometimes with small tweaks, during my workshops and facilitated sessions. With the goal to help people truly connect, to create a space where vulnerability feels okay, and to invite deeper, more meaningful conversations.

Every time I’ve done this, I’ve noticed something powerful: the rest of the session (or even the entire day) shifts. People start opening up in ways they wouldn’t have before. The conversations become more real, more human, more honest. They connect deeper.





That said, as a facilitator, I've learned to be mindful of pacing. Pushing people too deep, too fast, can feel overwhelming rather than inviting. I'd encourage you to gauge the room, lean into the energy of the group and adjust accordingly. The goal isn't to force vulnerability but to create the right context for it to emerge naturally.

And most importantly; have fun with it! Guiding people into deeper conversations can be one of the most rewarding parts of coaching and facilitation.

How-to use these questions

Examples for coaching:

- Use select questions as **journaling prompts** for clients. Giving them time to think and reflect.
- Weave them into coaching conversations to help clients **explore values, fears, and aspirations**.
- Encourage clients to reflect on how their answers change over time. Helping them **reveal their own growth**.

Examples for facilitation:

- Start with Set I for **light introductions**, then move into Set II/III for **deeper trust-building**.
 - Pair people up or create small breakout groups where they **take turns answering a question** before rotating partners.
 - Use the questions to help people develop **emotional intelligence** (through listening intently) and **self-awareness** (by reflecting on their own answers).
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* The original research on the **36 Questions That Lead to Love** was conducted by Arthur Aron and his colleagues at *Stony Brook University* in New York. The study was published in 1997 and explored how mutual vulnerability and self-disclosure can accelerate closeness between individuals.

Original Research Paper:

- Title: *The Experimental Generation of Interpersonal Closeness: A Procedure and Some Preliminary Findings*
- Authors: *Arthur Aron, Edward Melinat, Elaine N. Aron, Robert Darrin Vallone, Renee J. Bator*
- Journal: *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*
- Publication Year: 1997
- Research article: <https://doi.org/10.1177/01461672972340>





Study Location & University:

- Conducted at Stony Brook University, New York
- Department of Psychology

The study was designed to test how *structured personal questions* could create intimacy. Participants, who were previously strangers, engaged in progressively deeper self-disclosure questions, culminating in sustained eye contact. The study found that many participants felt significantly closer after completing the exercise. One pair from the original study actually fell in love and got married, a famous anecdote often cited in discussions about the research.

The study demonstrated that intimacy can be accelerated between strangers through structured self-disclosure. The quality and depth of conversation matter more than the length of time spent together.

