***self-disclosure & interpersonal closeness***

*This interpersonal sharing exercise is taken from research by Professor Arthur Aron*

*(see abstract and link over the page). Here are the (slightly adapted) instructions.*

*Please read them carefully before continuing:*

This is an exercise in interpersonal closeness, and your task, which we think will be quite enjoyable, is simply to get emotionally closer to another person. We believe that a very good way of doing this is for you to share openly with them and for them to share with you. In order to help you get close we've arranged for the two of you to engage in a kind of sharing game.

You have been given three *Sets* of questions (see below). Each *Set* consists of a dozen questions or tasks. As soon as you both finish reading these instructions, you should begin with *Set I*. Please would one of you choose any of the twelve first *Set I* questions to read out aloud and then BOTH do what it asks, starting with the person who read the question. When you are both done, swap over with the other person now choosing any of the remaining *Set 1* questions, reading it out, and then taking turns to both do what it asks … and so on, continuing to take turns.

When you read out a question, share your answer with your partner. Then let them share their answer to the same question with you. If there is a task involved, do it first, then let your partner do it. Alternate who reads aloud (and thus goes first) with each new question.

You will be informed when to move on to the next *Set* of questions. It’s not important to finish all the questions in each *Set* within the allotted time. Take plenty of time with each question, doing what it asks thoroughly and thoughtfully. You may begin! Turn to *Set I*, question 1.

*(In the original research study, the exercise took 45 minutes. Participants were asked to move on to the next Set of questions after each 15 minutes. This meant that even participants who were taking some time with their answers would get to the somewhat more intimate set III questions. It is of course possible to increase or reduce the time allocated for each Set of questions).*

***Set I***

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***

1. If a crystal ball could tell you the truth about yourself, your life, the future or anything else, what would you want to know?
2. Is there something that you’ve dreamed of doing for a long time? Why haven’t you done it?
3. What is the greatest accomplishment of your life?
4. What do you value most in a friendship?
5. What is your most treasured memory? ***[PTO.]***
6. What is your most terrible memory?
7. If you knew that in one year you would die suddenly, would you change anything about the way you are now living? Why?
8. What does friendship mean to you?
9. What roles do love and affection play in your life?
10. Alternate sharing something you consider a positive characteristic of the person you’re doing this exercise with. Share a total of five items each.
11. How close and warm is your family? Do you feel your childhood was happier than most other people’s?
12. How do you feel about your relationship with your mother?

***Set III***

1. Make three true *“we”* statements each. For instance, *“We are both in this room feeling ... “*
2. Complete this sentence: *“I wish I had someone with whom I could share ... “*
3. If you were going to become a close friend with the person you’re doing this exercise with, please share what would be important for him or her to know.
4. Tell the person you’re paired with doing this exercise with what you like about them; be very honest this time, saying things that you might not say to someone you’ve just met.
5. Share with the person you’re doing this exercise with an embarrassing moment in your life.
6. When did you last cry in front of another person? By yourself?
7. Tell the person you’re paired with in this exercise something you like about them already.
8. What, if anything, is too serious to be joked about?
9. 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?
10. 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?
11. Of all the people in your family, whose death would you find most disturbing? Why?
12. Share a personal problem and ask the person you’re paired with doing this exercise their advice on how he or she might handle it. Also, ask the person you’re paired with to reflect back to you how you seem to be feeling about the problem you have chosen.

*(This isn’t part of the original Aron instructions, but sometimes one can add*

*a final section … a four minutes “silent gaze exercise”)*

Aron, A., et al. (1997). *"The Experimental Generation of Interpersonal Closeness: A Procedure and Some Preliminary Findings."* Pers Soc Psychol Bull **23**(4): 363-377. http://tinyurl.com/mptvwcf

A practical methodology is presented for creating closeness in an experimental context. Whether or not an individual is in a relationship, particular pairings of individuals in the relationship, and circumstances of relationship development become manipulated variables. Over a 45-min period subject pairs carry out self-disclosure and relationship-building tasks that gradually escalate in intensity. Study 1 found greater post interaction closeness with these tasks versus comparable small-talk tasks. Studies 2 and 3 found no significant closeness effects, in spite of adequate power, for (a) whether pairs were matched for non disagreement on important attitudes, (b) whether pairs were led to expect mutual liking, or (c) whether getting close was made an explicit goal. These studies also illustrated applications for addressing theoretical issues, yielding provocative tentative findings relating to attachment style and introversion/extraversion.