

"You Can Observe a Lot by Watching" and 24 Other Brilliant Answers to a Mind–Boggling Question

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By Walter Burek

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It's inevitable. It will happen at work, at a party, or a job interview. Even a client meeting. If you're in the marketing communications biz long enough someone, some time, somewhere is going to ask you the question: "Where do you get your ideas?"

The first thing to remember when this happens to you is to remain calm. Nobody who asks this question expects you to bore them to tears by actually discoursing on the "creative process" (which someone once described as "making sausage and you don't want to know.")

On the other hand, you don't want to sound totally clueless either. So, here's what to do: Plant your feet firmly, look your questioner in the eye and let one or two of the following witty and wise sayings flow smoothly off your tongue.

They're short and sweet -- and guaranteed to make you sound brilliant. And by the way, don't feel guilty about borrowing any of them because, as Voltaire said, "Originality is nothing but judicious imitation."

"I don't know where my ideas come from...however ... one key ingredient is caffeine. I get a couple of cups of coffee into me and things just start to happen."

– Gary Larson

"The best way to get a good idea is to get a lot of ideas."

– Linus Pauling

"I shut my eyes in order to see."

– Paul Gauguin

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"Some men see things as they are and say, why. I dream things that never were and say, why not."

– George Bernard Shaw

"Eighty percent of success is showing up."

– Woody Allen

"An idea can turn to dust or magic, depending on the talent that rubs against it."

– Bill Bernbach

"Creativity is really the structuring of magic."

– Anne Kent Rush

"Life is trying things to see if they work."

– Ray Bradbury

"Try? There is no try. There is only do or not do."

– Yoda (in *The Empire Strikes Back*)

"A hunch is creativity trying to tell you something."

– Frank Capra

"The art of creation is older than the art of killing."

– Andrei Voznesensky

"Look and you will find it; what is sought will go undetected."

– Sophocles

"It's simple. you just take something and do something to it, and then do something else to it. Keep doing this and pretty soon you've got something."

– Jasper Johns

"The mind is like a parachute; it only works when it is open"

– Unknown

"Every new idea looks crazy at first."

— Alfred North Whitehead

"Je ne cherche pas; je trouve." (I do not seek; I find.)

— Pablo Picasso

"Without deviation, progress is not possible"

— Frank Zappa

"Lady — if you don't know, don't mess with it."

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-- Louis Armstrong (when asked exactly what jazz is)

"The life of the creative man is lead, directed and controlled by boredom. Avoiding boredom is one of our most important purposes."

– Saul Steinberg

"The creation of a thousand forests is in one acorn."

– Ralph Waldo Emerson

"People learn more from observation than they do from conversation."

-- Will Rogers

"You can observe a lot by watching"

– Yogi Berra

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Are You Fine or Fantastic?

By Martin Avis

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It takes a small child to make us see sense sometimes.
My 7–year old daughter loves school and on the days
that I collect her, I always greet her with,

"Hi Charlotte, how are you?"

And nine times out of ten she answers,

"Hi Daddy, I'm brilliant!"

It is impossible not to smile at such an open
exhibition of enthusiasm. Her positivity is infectious.

Yet, like most adults, it took a while to dawn on me that I could learn something from my own child.

I was thinking about her when I met a business colleague the other day.

"Hello, Martin," he said as we automatically shook hands, "how are you?"

It was on the tip of my tongue to say "I'm fine", or, "not too bad" as I would normally respond. But instead, Charlotte's smiling face popped into my mind and I came back with,

"I'm brilliant, thank you. How are you?"

A flicker of confusion crossed his face as my unexpected response sank in. Then a big smile spread across this rather dour businessman's face and he said,

"You know, I'm feeling pretty brilliant too!"

We had a great meeting.

Charlotte's natural enthusiasm taught me a big lesson: that we go through life saying and hearing conditioned responses that really mean absolutely nothing. It is only when we break out of the expected that real

communication occurs.

What do 'fine', 'okay', 'not too bad', 'all right', 'pretty good' and all the other non–responses really mean? Absolutely nothing. They mean nothing because the question that they answer usually means less than nothing.

'How are you', 'how're you doing', 'how's the family' are meaningless punctuation. Most often the person asking is not even looking at you – and rarely are they listening to your equally meaningless answer.

Yet, by hijacking that automatic question and giving a completely unexpected – and exciting answer – we can take control of a conversation. And more, force the

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other person to think positively of us.

I could have said 'marvellous' or 'first–class' or 'absolutely splendid' or any number of positive, energizing statements. But I liked Charlotte's choice.

It is certainly true that you never get a second chance to make a first impression. Let your first impression in any meeting, be brilliant!

Martin Avis is a management and training consultant. To get your unfair advantage (and 6 free gifts) in Internet marketing, business and personal success, subscribe free to his weekly newsletter, BizE–zine. <mailto:subscribe5@BizE–zine.com> or visit his information–packed website at <http://www.BizE–zine.com>



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