

Valencia Students Into Random Acts of Listening

I was happily invited, for a second time, as sometime-professor at the University of Valencia to work with students in the Erasmus program “European Master in Work, Organizational and Personnel Psychology (WOP-P) 2024” for the course Intervention in Organizations, Organizational Change and Development (see photo). My three-day lecture is about contemporary methods of organizational change and development: Appreciative Inquiry interventions.



This [LinkedIn post](#) by Bishal Sala gives an impression of how it went. AI, of course, is the perfect practice for a process of “learning by doing”. We designed our own AI-summit on the self-chosen – and essential – topic of Work-Life-Balance.

Fast forward to the individual assignment I created, inspired by Nick Heap and Random Acts of Listening initiative, which turned out to be a great success, highly rewarding for both teacher and students.



Cees Hoogendijk

www.ceeshoogendijk.com

mail@ceeshoogendijk.nl

Appreciate Inquiry Reflection with a Stranger

Rhens Rio Emil D. Guevarra

One Friday evening at the park while I was reflecting on “the week that was” after school, I overheard a man who seemed to be speaking Latin American Spanish. He also seemed so different to me. I was intrigued. I like to wear earthy, pastel colours, while he was all in black. I approached him and asked if I could ask a few questions for a project. I told him “it’s going to be a quick conversation about life”. He agreed.

We began with the question “what moment in your life you have felt most alive?”. He smiled, but seemed so stunned by the question. What we agreed would be a quick conversation turned out to be an hour of appreciation about life. As we spoke, I learned more about this stranger’s passion for kickboxing and how it helps him cope with life. He described his love for his friends back in Honduras. His longing for his mom’s cooking. How music keeps him alive.

Then he talked about the challenges of living in Spain. He shared how, day by day, despite his effort to keep friendships going, he is starting to lose contact with some of his friends back home. But life goes on. He has started meeting new people and building a life here. We realized how when one moves to a different place, so much of ourselves changes.

What started as a simple inquiry turned into a conversation about hope, and this is the part that really got me emotional. Both of us are students in Spain. Next year, we are graduating from our Master's programs. Ramon (him) and I, despite missing home, prefer to stay in Spain. It's not so easy for people like us. But there is always hope. And it is up to us to design the life we want. This was a difficult conversation, but something I needed at that very moment. The past few weeks, I've started to feel anxious about my future and it was comforting to have this conversation with a stranger.

You see, at first, Ramon was so different to me. I am soft-spoken and he was "a bit of force", I would say. We have different hobbies, are from different cultures. But deep within, we are not so different. Such experience is a beautiful reminder of the interconnectedness of the human life, no matter where we come from. For an hour, we turned from strangers into, well, strangers who happened to know more about each other's lives. Maybe we can become friends in the future if we hang out together more. We exchanged Instagrams and told each other we'd go out for a coffee sometime.

As I left the park that evening, I reflected on how every conversation has the potential to energize us, even when shared with a stranger. I found myself wondering: what if I make this a more regular practice? Instead of spending hours scrolling through social media, what if I engage in conversations with people at the gym or in my community? If social media often feels superficial, then these genuine interactions could be the true social energizers we crave.

Table 1. Questions I prepared to set the structure but I kept the conversation fluid and flexible.

Section	Questions
<i>Energizing Question</i>	What are the moments in your life where you felt most alive and fulfilled?
<i>Define</i>	What core values or passions define who you are and what you want to achieve?
<i>Discovery (What gives life?)</i>	What experiences or activities make you feel energized and connected?
<i>Dream (What might be?)</i>	What dreams or aspirations are you most excited about pursuing?
<i>Design (What should be?)</i>	What would need to change or grow in your life to make your dreams a reality?
<i>Destiny (What will be?)</i>	What small actions could you take now that align with your dreams?