Reflection Decks

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Explore Your Humanity with the Right Questions.

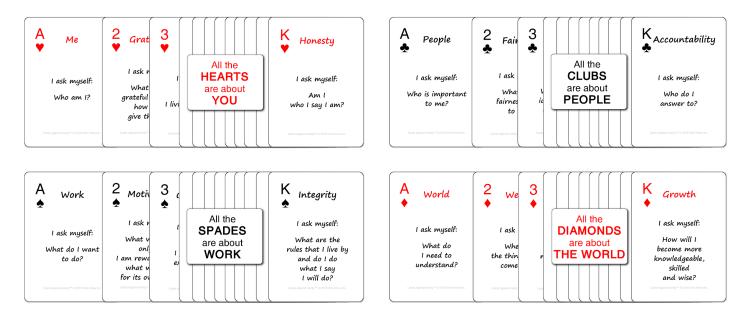
These Reflection Cards consist of two decks of playing cards that help you explore your humanity.



The *Deck of We* contains questions for a group of people to ask themselves. These are good for a couple, a class, a club, a company or even a country.



The **Deck of Me** contains questions to ask yourself to create a philosophy of life so you can live by design rather than by default.



Each suit has a theme that begins with a fundamental question and ends with a virtue.

This covers all aspects of life. We say, "You are among people in the world and your work is in you."

There are two Jokers that ask about Mortality and Purpose. It might be best if you only think about these questions after you have thought about all the others and are pretty far along in your studies or career. This is because people often fall into the trap of thinking they cannot motivate themselves to do anything until after they know what their purpose is. If you don't already know what your purpose is then it is likely to reveal itself only after you are pretty far along in doing something that is interesting to you and of value to others.

Play "What's the Question" with your friends. Here is a simple game you can play:

- 1. Remove the Aces and the Jokers from both decks, shuffle the decks together and deal five cards to each player.
- 2. Each player selects one card they are most interested in. The other cards are returned to the deck.
- 3. All players reveal the card they selected and explain why the question is of interest but do not attempt to answer it. Only after all the questions have been explained does anyone answer.
- 4. If a "We ask ourselves" question has been chosen from the *Deck of We* then the person who selected the question leads a discussion of the topic. "I ask myself" questions from the *Deck of Me* are not discussed in the group unless everyone agrees to discuss it.
- 5. Once all the questions have been discussed the cards are discarded and the deck is shuffled and five cards are dealt to each player and a second round is played. Repeat for a third round.
- 6. After three rounds are played, each person asks, "Who are we?" and collectively you all try to come to a consensus.
- 7. Then each player answers the question, "What do I want to do?"
- 8. If the group decides to do something together, then do it. If individual players decide to do things together in smaller groups then they should also do those things. Ultimately, end with activities rather than just discussion.
- 9. Always end each session by giving thanks for the time spent together and suggesting a further meeting, if possible.

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Print this document on heavy card stock and cut it up into cards.

Create a Philosophy

You don't need to read this right away.

Some good questions. On the *Deck of Me* are some good questions for you to ask yourself in order to build a robust philosophy of life. On the *Deck of We* are good questions for a group of people to ask themselves in order to improve their relationships and work better together.

Let's get started. You and I can do this together and I encourage you to also include some friends.

Ask yourself: Who am I? For now answer this question in a few sentences, as you might when you first meet someone at a party. Here is my answer:

My name is Brooke and I am the creator of these cards. I am a male and I was born in 1952. My career arc has taken me from mathematics and computer science to finance. I retired from work in 2014.

I began developing these questions in 2011 as I looked for a new life mission to inspire me during retirement. As I write this in 2018, thousands of people the world over have used these questions and reported amazing results. They help students prepare for college and for life after school. They have helped unemployed people find new work and retirees find a new purpose. Grandparents have used them in conversations with grandchildren and coaches and therapists have used them with clients.

Ask yourself: Who is important to me? We play many roles and most of them have to do with our relationships with people we choose to make important in our lives.

As a son, my parents have been important to me my whole life. Later I got married and had two sons so my wife and children became important. When I was working for a living my clients, employees, managers and investors were important.

Because you are using my cards, you are important to me too.

Ask yourself: What do I need to understand? There are many things you need to understand and the answer to this question will vary depending on the circumstances. One thing you need to understand is how these cards can help you. What else?

I want to understand all the ways people use these cards. I hope you will want to share your thoughts with me. Please write to me at: **Brooke@BrookeAllen.com.**

Ask yourself: What do I want to do? Let's not think so much about what you want to have but rather what you want to do. For example, if you want a job then say, "I want to find a job." or if you want someone to love say, "I want to find someone to love." By speaking of "doing" rather than "having" you will get yourself into an active mindset rather than merely wishing for things.

I have always wanted a life of adventure. When I was 14 my grandmother told me a secret. She said, "When you have a choice, choose adventure. The problem is, most people don't know what adventure is. They think it is the thing that promises the most excitement. That's not it. Adventure is the thing where you don't know what will happen."

When we use these cards we go on an adventure. We're never sure what will happen. That's what makes it fun. So, what I want to do is go on an adventure with you.

Involve others. Life is much more satisfying if you don't do it alone. Gather some friends, colleagues or even strangers and do this together. If you are reading this together and if you haven't done it yet then everyone should answer these four questions.

Who are we? Those four questions you've just answered are from the Aces on the *Deck of Me*. Now let's look at the Ace of Hearts on the *Deck of We*. It asks: Who are we?

So, who are we? What relationship do you and I have? How are we connected?

I've thought about this a lot while I was designing these cards and have decided that each of us has four circles of people around us. The first I call "family" and these are the people who will help me even when I am depressed or scared and not very likeable. Then there are friends. We spend time together and we generally like each other but can't be relied upon all the time because we all have our own problems and priorities. Then there are communities, and these are the people who might help me even if they don't know me. Finally, there is everyone else, whom I call "humankind."

You and I are not family or friends but if you're reading this then we have more in common than our humanity. I hope that you and I and everyone who uses these cards will come to think of ourselves as a community. The thing that brings us together is that we are contemplating most of the same questions as we explore our humanity. All it will take for us to be a community is for us to help each other now and then. There is no obligation; all it requires is desire. Not only can we share our answers and get good ideas that we can't think of on our own, we will also feel a bit less lonely.

What makes these questions so powerful? There is something almost magical about how the questions on these cards can help you live a better life and improve your relationships. Here are some of the reasons why this is true.

Questions are better than answers. It turns out that your unconscious mind automatically answers the questions you consciously ask. For example, ask yourself: "What shall I have for lunch next Wednesday?" Whatever

thoughts you have next came from somewhere. That is your subconscious answering the question you put to it.

Often, it is better to ask good questions than to make make emphatic statements. For example, let's imagine you want to exercise regularly but find it hard to do. You get up in the morning and state emphatically, "I will exercise today." You feel really good as you go about your day but just as you are about to fall asleep you realize you didn't exercise and you say, "What's wrong with me? Why don't I do what I say I will do?"

There is a better way.

Understand how your brain works. It will help if you understand how your brain works. When you said, "I will exercise today" that is like making a commitment Your subconscious brain thinks, "Good as done." and doesn't think about it much, especially if it is something you don't want to do. At the end of the day, when you realize you haven't done what you said you would do, some part of you says, "What a hypocrite" and you feel bad. Tomorrow you might go around asking yourself, "What's wrong with me?" and if you do that enough then: 1) You'll find plenty of things wrong with you, 2) You'll get depressed. So, let's not do that.

Instead of stating that you will exercise, when you get up in the morning, ask yourself, "Will I exercise today?" Your subconscious mind will try to answer that question just like it does with all questions, but it cannot say, "yes" unless you actually exercise and until you do exercise it won't let you forget the question. Although it is not guaranteed, statistically you are more likely to exercise when you ask the question than when you make a statement. At the end of the day, if you don't exercise then the question is simply "no." Although you won't reap the benefits of exercise, at least you aren't a hypocrite.

By the way, I'm not making this up. If you want to learn more then research what psychologists say about the difference between affirmative and interrogative self-talk.

Learn the questions but don't sweat the answers. Learn all of the questions but don't worry about the answers right now. The best answers will come later. This is also because of how your subconscious mind works.

When a problem has you vexed, or when you have free time to work on improving yourself, then go through the cards and pick one or two questions that seem appropriate at the time. Put these cards at your bedside and read the questions right before going to sleep. When you wake up in the morning, think about the questions again and see if anything occurred to you overnight. Do this for three nights in a row and if nothing occurs to you then it is possible you haven't picked the right questions to ask yourself. Try some others.

Happiness is not a good goal. When you ask people in Western consumer oriented cultures what they want I think you'll find the most common answer is, "I just want to be happy." These people often make themselves

miserable worrying about the fact that they are not happy all the time.

This is absurd. Happiness is a fleeting emotion and wanting to be happy all the time makes no more sense than wanting to laugh all the time. If you did laugh every waking moment then people would think you are a nut job, and they might be right.

The problem is that companies know this and the implicit message in their advertising is that if you will only buy their product then you will feel happy. Believing this can cost you a lot of money and your sanity.

It is better to realize that life is a tragic comedy. You will experience times of happiness and of sadness, of love and of anger, of serenity and of fear. To be alive is to experience a rich tapestry of emotions and it is best to understand this and embrace your humanity. The ancient Greeks knew this. Let us not forget.

Your character becomes your destiny. It's been said that you should watch your thoughts for they become your words, your words become your actions, your actions become your habits, your habits become your character and your character becomes your destiny. Put your answers to these questions into words and action and your new habits will shape your character.

The *Deck of Me* questions merely begin a process that must lead to actions that become habituated if you are to take charge of your destiny.

It isn't about you. The Indian poet, Rabindranath Tagore, said, "I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy."

Have you ever felt like you are of no use to anyone? It is hard to imagine a worse feeling. Sometimes we ask the wrong questions or we answer them in the wrong way. For example, "Who is important to me?" could as easily be "Who am I important to?" If you are struggling to find a purpose to your life, you might ask: "Who needs me to do what I do?"

Live by design, not by default. Design is the act of deciding what a thing should be. On these decks of cards are design questions for intentionally building your character and your relationships. You can live by default if you want, but you will be giving up control of your life to others and to chance.

Be the best version of you that you can be. You must strive to be the best possible version of yourself that you can be. We all owe that to each other and to ourselves. All other species follow this mandate and those among us who are born better endowed are not exempted from living up to their potential just because they have more.. You must do your part because we humans are humanity's only hope. With the possible exception of our house pets, all other species are too busy being the best they can be and they don't have time to care if we pull through.

Sharing

We ask ourselves:

Who will be
upset if one day in the
future they discover
we did not invite them
to explore these questions
with us today?

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Deck of We

QUESTIONS FOR IMPROVING RELATIONSHIPS

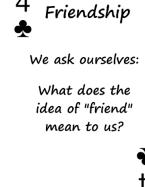
Whether you are one person in a couple, a family, a club, a company or even a country there is probably room for improvement. When the members of a group discuss these questions they can improve their understanding of the purpose of the group and of each other.

If you are a teacher, a therapist or a coach who is leading a group with the primary purpose of benefiting the individual members then it is probably a good idea to begin with these questions so as to establish the nature of the group. Also, talking about the group first helps break the ice and makes it easier for individuals to talk about themselves later.

return?







Community

We ask ourselves:

What does the

idea of "community"

mean to us?







We ask ourselves:

What are we doing to develop better habits?



Judgment

We ask ourselves:

When must we judge others and when must we reserve judgment?



Followership

Are we blaming leaders for things that could be our responsibility?



want to lead and what are our responsibilities to those who follow us?





Good vs. Nice

We ask ourselves:

Will we do the right thing even when others will dislike us if we do?



War vs. Peace

We ask ourselves:

Would we rather defeat our enemies or live in peace with them?



Knowing vs. Doing

We ask ourselves:

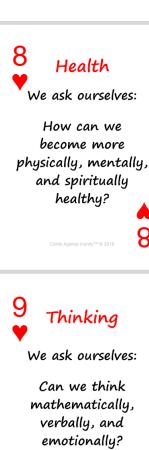
How might we benefit from more knowledge and when will we know enough to act?



Now vs. Later We ask ourselves:

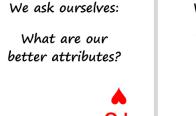
What rewards can we put off until later so we can concentrate on doing our best work now?











Self-Love









We ask ourselves:

Can we, will we, and do we forgive ourselves and others?



Empathy ve ask ourselves:

Can we understand what others feel. think and do even if we don't like them?



Entropy

We ask ourselves:

How will we resist the forces of chaos?

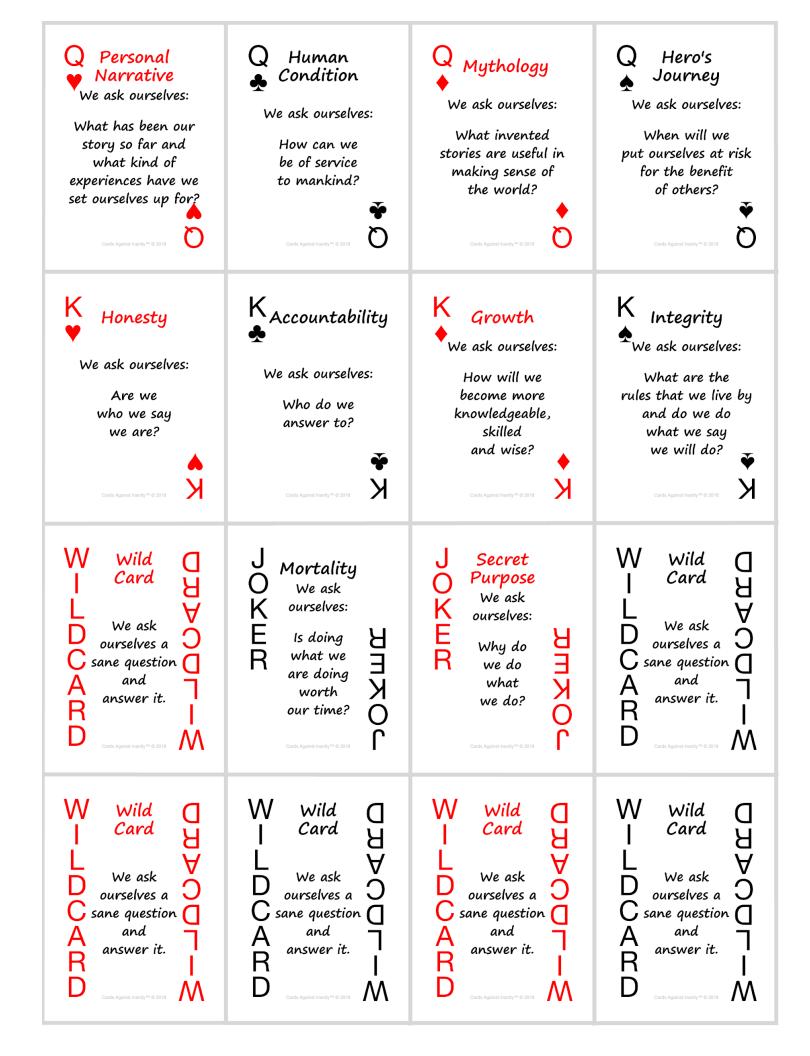




We ask ourselves:

How can we get others to want us to meet their needs?





Philosophy of Life

I ask myself:

How might
I answer questions
in advance of
needing answers?

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Deck of Me

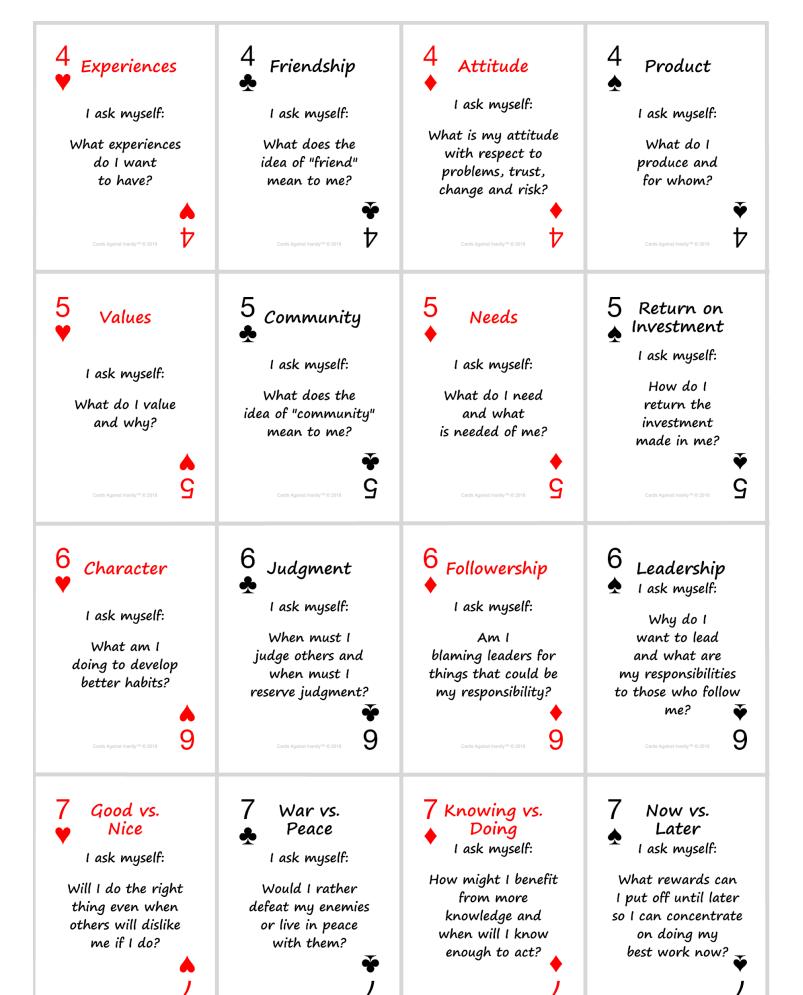
LIVE AS THE PERSON YOU WANT TO BE

You are many people inhabiting one body and mind. There is the "past you" who you once were, the "present you" who you are now and the "future you" who you aspire to become. Forgive your "past you" and learn from your mistakes. Then make an honest assessment of the "present you" so you know where you are starting from.

When thinking about all your possible "future yous" answer these questions as each potential kind of person you might become. When you choose one "future you" who you want to be, then live as that person would, not as you are now or as you once were.

return?









I ask myself:

Can I, will I, and do 1 forgive myself and others?



Empathy

I ask myself:

Can I undersand what others feel, think and do even if I don't like them?





Entropy

I ask myself:

How will I resist the forces of chaos?



Salesmanship

I ask myself:

How can I get others to want me to meet their needs?



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