

International Conversation Cafe

Lifestyle Topic: Names

Have you ever marveled at the melody of a friend's name, or stumbled over a syllable that feels as foreign as a distant land? Ever wondered why parents might ponder over books and heritage to bestow just the right name upon their child? To some cultures, names are not just ID tags; they are the first gift we receive, a legacy, a riddle, a whisper of potential and pride. In this conversation, we will explore the tapestry of cultures, languages, and histories that our names weave, connecting us all in this intricate web of humanity.

Significance of our names

Sometimes names are like time capsules, holding the history, hopes, and dreams of our people. They can tell us where we come from and hint at who we are meant to be. Read all four questions and then invite people to choose one they want to answer.

1. *What does your name mean in your culture or language? (share all your names if you like) Who named you, and is there a story behind your name?*
2. *Are there any traditions in your culture regarding naming children? Are there any unique naming traditions for twins or specific birth orders ?*
3. *Do names have particular significance in your family, religion, or culture? How are last names chosen or used?*
4. *Are there any interesting legends, historical figures, or meanings associated with your name?*

Names and Identity

Names intertwine with our identity, carrying the weight of heritage and personal history. They can shape our narratives, reflecting and influencing who we are and how we engage with the world. Our names encapsulate individuality, culture, and the stories we carry through life. Read these next questions in groups of three and invite people to pick one of the three to comment on.

5. *How does your name contribute to your identity?*
6. *Have you ever felt that your name influences people's expectations of you?*
7. *Have you ever considered changing your name? If so, what motivated this thought?*
8. *In what ways does your name represent or conflict with your self-image?*
9. *Do you have a nickname, and if so, how does it reflect different aspects of yourself?*
10. *How do you think your life might be different if you had a different name?*

Pronunciation and Preferences

For some people, the correct pronunciation of their names feel like a melody to their ears, a sign of respect and belonging, while for others, the emphasis is less about the note-perfect rendition and more about the intention and effort behind the attempt. Read the four questions and invite people to choose one of the four to comment on.

11. *How is your name pronounced, and what common mistakes do people make? Is there a shortened version of your name that you prefer?*
12. *How important is it for you that people pronounce your name correctly? Are there any adaptations of your name that you particularly like or dislike?*
13. *Have you experienced any challenges with your name in a multicultural environment? Do you think the way names are pronounced can affect someone's sense of belonging or identity?*
14. *How do you approach learning and pronouncing names that are unfamiliar to you?*

Name = Reputation

Read the following quotes.

Kaplan did not ask the jury for a specific damage amount, saying her client only wants her *good name* back.—David Jackson, *USA TODAY*, 8 May 2023

In pharmaceuticals, exposure and a *good name* are everything.—Lauren Larson, *Men's Health*, 7 Sep. 2023

Toshiba's *good name* was sullied in recent years by a major accounting scandal and the collapse of energy subsidiary Westinghouse.—David Meyer, *Fortune*, 20 Dec. 2023

Read the questions. Invite one another to answer only one of the questions.

Are the words "good name" associated with a good reputation in your country or culture?

What kinds of behaviors would ruin a person's good name?

What kinds of behaviors would give a person a good name?

Is it possible to regain a good name after one has lost it?



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