

# 101 Questions You Need to Ask in Your Twenties

(and let's be honest, your thirties too)

PAUL ANGONE



# What's the best way to break up with myself?

Have you ever gone through a bad breakup?

I have.

I once drove a total of 18 hours in torrential rain to meet my girlfriend's parents, upon her request, where the parent meet-and-greet went amazing, and I left feeling like this could be "The One."

Then on the drive home, in the hurricane-esque rain, both sides of the highway I was trying to get home on were shut down—a mudslide wiping out one side of the highway and a semitruck turned over on the other, so I was ushered into a field with hundreds of other cars to wait for the highway to open up. I called my girlfriend to give her the update and her first response was—"Paul, we need to talk."

This wasn't "Paul we need to talk" about how amazing you are and our life together with our 2.4 kids.

No, she then proceeded to break up with me while I sat in my Honda, in a field, in the pouring rain, after driving 18 hours to meet her parents. I felt like I was living in a *Dawson's Creek* episode.

The next day after a breakup is surreal, isn't it?

When you wake up the next morning and don't know what to do with yourself. So at 9:00 a.m. you find yourself crumbling up Oreos into a peanut butter jar and eating it with a spork while you watch a TV marathon of *Gilmore Girls*. For three days straight. Your roommates pleading with you to do something, *anything*—for your health of course, but also because of the unmistakable “breakup odor” you're beginning to bless the entire house with.

Breakups are extremely tough because so much of your identity, plans, and future was wrapped up in that other person. When that is taken away, you feel lost.

Most life transitions are pretty similar to a bad breakup, aren't they?

But instead of breaking up with someone else, you're breaking up with a season of your life and who you were during that time. You're not only leaving a place behind, but you're also leaving behind a version of yourself. **In life transitions, you're kind of breaking up with yourself.**

And just like the time the relationship you were so sure about met its dramatic end, there's a real sense of wondering and wandering when you leave behind who you were.

Sure, there are mementos of you from the past that you'll carry with you. But the moment you leave who you were is the moment you begin the epic search to find out who you really are.

## TRANSITIONS ARE HARD

Yet, we talk about life transitions like they're so simple. So light and breezy.

*I'm just going through a bit of a transition.*

No big deal, right?

*Wrong.*

**Transitions can come like a punch in the gut when you're looking the other way.**

Do you know what our introduction to the concept of transition was? Birth!

And while I thankfully don't remember mine, I have now experienced up close and personal the birth of my three children, and that's when I realized for the first time that it was possible to cry, throw up in your mouth, and pass out—all at the same time. And that's just as the husband who isn't exactly doing any of the actual work.

They even call the last phase of birth the “transitional” phase. And I think my wife would tell you, there's nothing light and breezy about it!

There's nothing simple about major life transitions and we're constantly going through them in life, especially during our twenties. Whether the transition is glaring—like college graduation, marriage, starting a new job, or unceremoniously getting laid off from the job you have—or the transition is discreet and gradual like the sun moving across the sky, slowly changing your perspective of the landscape around you, life transitions are a huge deal. They are most often the toughest seasons of life to go through while also being the most important.

**There's something of strange significance that happens to us when we're stripped of everything we used to depend on.**

Nothing feels comfortable when in transition. Nothing feels normal. In transitions, feeling completely abnormal becomes the new normal.

## THE BIGGEST MISTAKE WE MAKE IN TRANSITION

Yet, here's the biggest mistake I think we make when going through transitions—we try to fly through them as fast as possible to get to

the other side. We try to find and cling to some new normal. Yet, oftentimes in our desperation for permanence, we stop ourselves short instead of letting the transition help carry us to the destination we needed to get to.

Life in your twenties can especially feel like one perpetual transition. You have no idea where you're going, yet you're sure you can't stay here.

So right now if you feel like your life is in major transition, that's normal. Stay calm, hold on, and stay intentional.

Maybe transitions aren't something to fly through but something to marinate in.

Don't just make it through a transition—make the transition matter.

**Transitions are not simply a bridge to the next important season of your life. Transitions *are* the most important seasons of your life.**

As you walk through transition, what guides your way? Is it fear? Or is it faith?

Faith says, *This transition is taking me to a much better place. Keep moving forward.*

Fear says, *Take me back to what was. Even though it was terrible, at least I knew what to expect.*

Where is your transition trying to lead you? What is it telling you about the future you want to transition into? Take a moment and think about this.

Yes, transitions can feel like a bad breakup. But wouldn't you rather break up than stay in a dead-end relationship?

# 2 ■ ■

## Am I struggling to make it appear like I'm not struggling?

**We're all struggling. Yet, we're all struggling to make it look like we're not struggling.**

The walls we build to protect our image only keep people away. We try to keep our wounded pride intact, while it's lying lifeless on the floor.

I've said it before, and I'll say it again right now because I know I need the reminder:

**We don't connect with each other through our pretend perfection. We connect over our shared struggle.**

Authenticity starts with you.

Be brave enough to go first.



# What kind of friendships do I have—Jetpack Friends, helping me fly, or Anvil Friends, repeatedly pulling me down into some dark basement?

Your life will resemble the lives of your closest friends. Does that fact excite you or freak you out?

Are your friends taking purposeful steps forward in life or are they still playing beer-pong in the basement?

Do you leave after hanging out with friends feeling anxious or alive? Are your friends anvils tied around your ankles or jetpacks helping you fly?

Our friendships are never going to be perfect. And sometimes we have to help carry our friends through hard times, as they in turn will help carry us through ours. “Friending” in our twenties is bound to be awkward at times and hit many different rough patches. As I wrote in *101 Secrets For Your Twenties*, “Making and keeping friendships in your 20s is harder than G.I. Joe’s abs.” We have to be willing to take risks in our relationships. Pursuing some friendships through the awkward phases and then letting go of other friendships that continually take us down.

This is what I mean by an Anvil Friend, someone who continually is a bad influence or negative voice in your life. Someone who doesn’t really want to see you change, grow, and be successful because they want you to stay stuck with them. If a “friend” does consistently more harm to you than any enemy would, I’m not sure this is the best kind of friend to hitch your life to.

So do you have more Anvil Friends, Jetpack Friends, or a mix of in-betweens? Well, let’s figure this out.

List the five people below who you spend the most time with. Put a number between 1 and 10 next to their name with a 1 being an Anvil Friend pulling you down and a 10 being a Jetpack Friend helping you fly. Then add up all the numbers to see what Friend-ing Category you fit into below.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.



## FRIENDING SCORECARD

---

- 40-50:** Your friends are going places, and they're taking you with them. Hold on for the ride!
- 30-39:** You have some gems in there, but there might be one lump of coal pulling down your Christmas stocking.
- 20-29:** Time to seriously start rethinking some of these "friendships." A bad friend is worse than a good enemy.
- 10-19:** With friends like these who needs enemies?
- 1-9:** Maybe it's time to move to Wyoming? Cows are pretty friendly.

# 4 ■ ■

**If I'm going to pursue a big dream, am I willing to drive a 1993 Honda Civic Hatchback with no power steering, no air conditioning, and no right mirror for 15 years?**

Pursuing something bigger than yourself will cost you something. So if you're going to pursue your purpose, what are you willing to sacrifice?

Thus, why I posed this question in Honda Civic Hatchback terms.

When I was 17-years-old, my dad was a pastor of a church, and a family who attended the church gave me a 1993 Honda Civic Hatchback. Being a pastor's kid has its drawbacks, sure—always sitting in the front row, while everyone judges every cough and time you start snoring. Oh, and that walk of shame when you show up ten minutes late and have to walk the long, green mile down the center aisle, everyone feeling more secure in their own salvation because at least they can show up to church on time. Unlike the pastor's family.

Then every mistake you make in high school is primed and ready to be choice church gossip to everyone's delight. It was like living in a reality show, without the fame or money!

But there were definitely perks of being a pastor's kid as well (mainly the fact that everyone knows your family doesn't have any money). And they want to snag some free points with God by helping your family out. And God bless them for it.

I was driving a 1977 Bonneville at the time that got seven miles to the gallon, while also having a gas gauge that didn't work (a fun realization during rush hour on day seven driving the car), so this Honda was a huge step up. I went from driving "The Tank" to driving "The Egg," and at pretty much every stage of my life, I've been made fun of for driving this car.

I bring this up because I'm still rolling around in The Egg to this day. And let me just admit that I'm just *a few* years north of high school graduation. And that Honda is currently running north of 240,000 miles!

I'm not opposed to having a nice car or a house someday. I've just been at peace sacrificing in those areas because other non-negotiables in my life were more important.

Then I just tell my kids that everyone who owns a big house is evil. So problem solved there. Kidding, of course. No, I just make my kids eat broccoli wrapped in kale every time they mention living in a big house. Then, when I mention living in an RV as a possible life idea for the family, and they get excited, I give them chicken nuggets and let them drink from the bottle of ketchup. Childhood conditioning done right.

Plus, my Honda Civic runs so low to the ground and starts shaking when it goes over 70 mph, so it feels like you're going dangerously fast at all times. Which my kids love.

The car was built without power steering, air conditioning, and no right mirror. Thank you Japanese efficiency. Even calling it a

car is a bit of an overstatement. Oh, and the radio volume turns up on its own, which is always a fun surprise. It goes from “Classical Piano” volume to “Heavy Metal Screaming Directly in your Ear” in 2.3 seconds. Really it’s the only thing the car does quickly.

But the car is so old and basic, it’s cool. I’m a hipster in my kids’ eyes, and they don’t even know what a hipster is. I’m going to run with this as long as I can.

**So in your career, your relationships, your life—what’s going to be your Honda Civic Hatchback?** Functional, yet not exactly something you’re pulling up to valet parking.

What are you willing to give up, and what are you going to cling tight to?

Are you willing to move anywhere, but you don’t want to take a job that expects more than 40 hours a week? Is job flexibility a nonnegotiable or is it job stability?

Do you need to create? Or lead? Work at a job that has a social impact? Or work at a job with a clear progression for financial gains?

Figuring out what you won’t give up and what you will sacrifice will tell you a lot about what you should pursue.

Someday I won’t be driving a 1993 Honda Civic Hatchback. Someday I’ll be riding around in 2003 Honda with the resplendent air of a Saudi Arabian prince. But today’s just not that day. Unless you tell about 30,000 friends to buy this book. Then, look out!

Write a list of three things you’re willing to sacrifice to pursue something bigger in your life.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



# Are there dark days ahead?

This question came out of a not-so-ordinary graduation speech by a not-so-ordinary speaker.

First, the speech was only four minutes long! A miracle in itself.

Second, and most importantly, the speaker that day wasn't just addressing the graduating class at Harrow School, but a whole country. And doing it with more power and truth in four minutes than most speakers deliver in a lifetime.

The graduation speaker? Winston Churchill. The year? 1941, as England stared down their complete annihilation in the hands of the Nazi army.

Yet, in the face of this harsh reality, Churchill spoke these words:

“Do not let us speak of darker days: let us speak rather of sterner days. These are not dark days; these are great days—the greatest days our country has ever lived; and we must all thank God that we have been allowed, each of us according to our stations, to play a part in making these days memorable in the history of our race.”

Churchill knew dark days. Through his lifetime the battle with depression that he called his “black dog,” to his political defeat that sent him in near political exile for the ten years leading up to

the war, to only face Hitler and the near destruction of England.

### **Winston Churchill knew how dark darkness could get.**

Yet, he made a call for a collective change of perspective. To not see the days ahead as dark, but as a great opportunity for great people to do great things for a great cause.

Churchill spoke to their collective purpose in the struggle instead of focusing on the pain.

And the even more amazing thing beyond these words that Churchill spoke was the loneliness, heavy unknowns, terror, and despair that he spoke these words into. France had just fallen to the Nazi army, England looked just months away from sharing the same fate, and the United States had not even entered the war yet.

Churchill was not speaking these words retroactively, looking back at the course of events that led them to victory. Churchill spoke these words in the face of utter destruction, yet he foresaw a radically different outcome than what the current facts at hand were shouting. He spoke into the face of destruction with hope and purpose. Then, he worked with all his heart to create that reality.

When we think about the tough times of our twenties, and there will be many. And the tough times we go through in the years after our twenties, and there will be many. Let us take to heart Churchill's cry to a generation embroiled in the toughest, yet greatest, days imaginable:

“Never give in. Never give in. Never, never, never, never—in nothing, great or small, large or petty—never give in, except to convictions of honor and good sense. Never yield to force. Never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy.”



## Do I love from my insecurities or from my strengths?

What's the difference?

Loving from your insecurities demands from others. Loving from your strengths gives to them.

Loving from your insecurities does not want to see people succeed more than yourself. Loving from your strengths hears of others' success and is the first to celebrate with them.

Loving from insecurities daily demands, "what are you going to do for me?" Loving from your strengths asks others, **"What can I do for you?"**

This is a question to ask in your friendships, dating relationships, marriage, etc.

If you "love" from your insecurities, your love will be needy and selfish. Loving from our insecurities can be the worst form of manipulation there is.

When someone loves from their strengths, they know who they are and are drawing from a deep, full well to give to you without demanding a drink in return.

I'm sure right now you can think of different people in your life and pinpoint who loves more from their strengths than their insecurities. There's a felt difference. A freedom in that relationship that encourages you to be the best version of yourself.

Too many people love from their insecurities, and that's not love.





## Am I seeing the other side of people's Instagram photos (you know, the side they're not exactly posting pictures of)?

It was 5:30 a.m. as my wife and I were driving through the sunrise of the Arizona desert, as we tried to take as much ground before our three kids arose from their backseat slumber. Pinks and yellows shot across the sky and began to light up the red cliffs and mesas lining the highways as the white outline of the full moon paid its respects to the morning before it bid its farewell. It was one of those picturesque moments that you know a picture would never fully capture.

Staring up at this morning desert sky is when my wife, Naomi, made this point that struck me like a rock shooting up and hitting our windshield.

“You know, when we see people’s success, it’s like looking at the moon—you just see the side that’s all lit up, but you don’t see their dark side of the moon.”

Her insight struck me as profound, even when running on only a few hours of sleep and gas station coffee on a 20-hour road-trip with three kids. So I knew there must be something to it!

I thought more about what she said. Even in their full glow, everyone has their dark side of the moon. No matter how successful they look, everyone has a side to their “groan up” life that is not exactly radiant or obvious to others.

Adulting is hard. As I wrote in my book *All Groan Up*, “You grow into growing up, each season bringing with it things you’re going to have to secretly Google to figure out how to do.” There’s another side to everyone’s Instagram photo that they’re not exactly taking a picture of.

Take for example the picture I posted on Instagram of my family standing in front of Hanging Lake in the Colorado Rockies. It’s a beautiful shot of my family huddled together in front of a majestic waterfall spilling into a clear, green lake thousands of feet up in the mountains. It was an unforgettable hike.

Yet, the reason we’re all huddled together is because it snowed most of the hike! The reason it was so unforgettable was because at different points of the trip I seriously wondered if we were going to make it back alive. I started imagining us as the lead story on the ten o’clock news of the parents who stupidly took their kids on a hike, where at the bottom of the hike read big signs that basically said, “Hey, idiots! This hike is hard. Don’t take young kids or dogs. We’re not bringing the helicopter out to rescue you!”

At one point I was holding my eight-month-old in my arms, who was getting sicker by the moment, while carrying my four-year-old, who was crying uncontrollably, on my back. Actually, every kid was crying uncontrollably. Then of course, it started snowing extremely hard on the hike back down, a trail covered in slick, wet rocks. I slipped once and almost fell hard with two kids following me down to the rocks below.

Somehow we made it back down, but now whenever we mention going hiking, my kids start slightly twitching and begin faking injuries. Yet, you don't quite get this full story when you look at the picture I posted on Instagram.

There's always two sides to people's pictures, people's lives, people's stories, just like there's two sides of the moon. The sun cannot shine on all sides of the moon at once just as few people can honestly say that every aspect of their adult life feels significant or is working out like they planned. And those who do say that the loudest and proudest, I've learned the hard way, are usually the ones with the darkest sides of the moon in the sky.

As my wife continued her Road Trip Dark Side of the Moon Comparison Theory, another thought struck me about the moon.

Whether it looks like a sliver, barely visible in the sky behind clouds or it's giant and alive, no matter how the moon looks on a given night, the moon is always the same size.

For some people, their glow feels larger than life while other times our own glimmer feels like it's barely existent. Yet, we are all human. We are all the same size.

**Significance and worth are not more or less available for anyone.**

Even if it feels like someone else's significance is an overwhelming beam of light that hurts your eyes to look at, they are the same size as everyone else. You just can't see it from where you stand.

# 8



**How do I get lost on purpose with purpose for a purpose (and not end up in some ravine, naked and eating bugs, wishing I would've just stayed indoors where it was safe)?**

*I feel lost.*

I hear this phrase a lot. With all the ambiguity that comes from emerging into adulthood, who can blame us for feeling directionless?

Yet, when someone tells me they feel lost, I tell them, “That’s amazing. I’m so glad you feel lost!”

And no I’m not being *that* guy who’s rubbing their *lostness* in their face with my enviable sports car and \$100,000 salary. Neither of which I have, of course. Unless by the time you’re reading this book ’93 Honda Civics have become so un-cool that they are now cool. And if that’s the case, then *ha*, take that everyone who called my car The Egg!

No, it's really important to get lost. I know that now. Because you can't explore if you first don't know exactly where you are going.

## ALL EXPLORERS HAVE TO FIRST GET LOST

I think as a generation we want to find our purpose.

We want to do something that means something.

Yet, we subconsciously expect the path to our purpose to be straightforward. We want to walk down a well-lit path with a cascading waterfall clearly in view from the start. At least, that was me in my early twenties.

If we can't handle ambiguity in life, we won't do anything great.

**We have to get lost if we want to discover something new and amazing.**

Sure, it might feel like you're going through a quarter-life crisis.

But maybe feeling lost is a healthy, important part of going through a transition.

Exploring and being lost are pretty much the same thing. The biggest difference is that explorers get lost on purpose with purpose for a purpose.

Explorers have a general sense of where they're going. They have guides to help them along the way.

They're not out there all alone.

Yet, the exact destination and how they're going to get there is completely unknown.

**Explorers don't follow a map, they make the map as they go.**

## MIND-EXPLODING LOSTNESS

For many of us, this concept of being at peace while feeling lost is a complete mind-explosion. It definitely was for me in my twenties.

Because we grow up with clear, concise instructions on how to be successful.

We're given the syllabus at the start of class.

We have a college counselor lay out the next four years for us to graduate with honors.

Yet, "groan up" life is messy, full of zigzags, start-overs, and *what were you thinking?*

**The path to your purpose is rarely straightforward.**

The only way you'll find a clear direction is by first allowing yourself to get lost. In the next question, let's breakdown what some of those benefits might be.

**YOUR TWENTIES  
AREN'T ABOUT THEM  
GOING AS YOU PLANNED.**

**BUT HOW YOU  
ADAPT,  
CHANGE,  
AND  
GROW  
WHEN THEY DON'T.**

**PAUL  
ANGONE**

***101 QUESTIONS  
YOU NEED TO ASK  
IN YOUR TWENTIES***

**#101Q**

# 9



## Are there actually benefits to feeling lost?

**“BEING LOST MIGHT BE THE EXACT SPOT THAT YOU WILL BE FOUND.”**

— *101 Secrets For Your Twenties*

Here are the six important things that happen to us when we feel lost:

**1. When you're off-trail, your creativity is put to the test.**

When you have to blaze the trail, you have to get creative. **Your genius is stoked when you're forced to actually use it.**

**2. There's a bit of healthy danger that makes your senses come alive.**

When you're off-trail, your senses are functioning at a higher level.

You're hearing more.

Seeing more.



Smelling, tasting, and touching in a way you can't, and won't, do when you're on a familiar path.

You take more in because you have to.

**3. You're more capable of experiencing life's unexpected surprises.**

You can't be surprised if you see everything clearly laid out in front of you.

**4. You don't get the right answers. You get the right questions.**

Succeeding in "groan up" life is not about always finding the right answers. It's about asking the right questions. And when you're lost in your twenties, the answers are incomplete.

When you're lost, you're ready to ask good questions because your life depends on it.

**5. As you explore new territory, you find new parts of yourself.**

Character is rarely developed sitting at a luxury resort.

**Your character is being built when everything around you feels like it's crumbling.**

Humility. Perseverance. Faith. Insight. Context. These aren't refined and defined when everything in your twenties makes complete sense.

When you don't know where you're going, you understand more about where you came from. **Ambiguity in life stokes clarity in character.**

**6. Purpose is found in the struggle.**

Your purpose is rarely honed in the clear-cut.

**We don't find our purpose in spite of the struggle, we find it smack dab in the middle of it.**

Do you feel lost? Congrats. You're officially exploring.

Take one step. Then another. You can't see what's up around the bend until you get there. When it feels like you want to turn back, remember—**the most exciting part of any journey is when you go off-trail.**

# ■ 10

## Should I really post this?

We've all been there. Where you've written your scathing report or sarcastic comment. Or you've uploaded that somewhat questionable photo. Now your finger is hovering over the "Post" button, and something stops you.

*Should I really post this?*

If you're asking the question, you probably already know the answer. Follow that instinct that's telling you to take your finger off the trigger.

You're creating your brand online with every single thing you share.

Once that shot is fired, there's no taking it back.

Job interviews are hard enough without them having your "dancing at the club" photos from spring break looking up at them from your job application folder.

When they ask you what you like to do for fun and you start telling them you like to feed homeless cats at the local church in your free time, I'm not sure they'll buy it.