



In The Thick of It

1. Would you donate a kidney to a stranger? What if your spouse or closest friend received such a donation—would that make you more likely to donate? Would it affect your decision-making if you knew that your donations would spur others also to donate?
2. Would you describe yourself as having many acquaintances or as having just a few close friends? If you threw a party, would the guests already know and like one another or would you be introducing everyone for the first time? How do you think the party would be different with different kinds of social networks?
3. Who has the greatest influence on you? Might there be other people who you do not know who have had an even greater influence on you?

When You Smile, the World Smiles With You

4. Have you ever been "infected" with laughter, anxiety, or other emotions like the girls in Tanzania? Do you laugh out loud when you are alone?
5. How do your friends' moods affect you? In what ways do people's emotions, including their happiness, reflect group behavior, like the flocking of birds?
6. Do you think men and women react differently to loneliness or depression? How would those differences affect the spread of emotions in men and women?

Love the One You're With

7. Nicholas and his wife Erika once lived within just four blocks of each other, but they had to be half a world apart before their social network brought them together. How did you meet your own spouse or significant other? Was it a chance encounter, or did you get some help from your friends and family? Is it possible that your "chance" encounter was not so chancy after all?
8. If physical attractiveness were measured on a ten-point scale, would you rather be a 6 in a world of 4's or an 8 in a world of 10's? Why? What about income? Would you rather earn \$32,000 where everyone else earns \$30,000 or \$33,000 where everyone else earns \$35,000? What about vacation days? Would you rather have two weeks of vacation per year where everyone else has one week, or would you rather have three weeks of vacation per year where everyone else has four weeks? What is the difference between these "goods" (attractiveness, income, and vacation days)?
9. Do you think friends affect how often we have sex or the kind of sex we have? How about parents—do they have an effect, too? Who do you think has more influence on teenagers, parents or peers?



Connected

10. Do you know anyone who has “died of a broken heart”? How do you think your partner might adjust if you died? Do you think it’s harder for men or women? In what ways?
11. Have you ever dated your ex-lover’s current lover’s ex-lover? Would that feel creepy? Why or why not?

This Hurts Me as Much as It Hurts You

12. Why do you think close friends who live hundreds of miles away might have as much of an effect on your eating and exercise behaviors as those who live next door? Given how social networks work, what might you do to change your weight and exercise habits?
13. If you go out for dinner with friends, are you the only one who orders a drink (or doesn’t order a drink)? Do your friends affect how much you drink or whether you smoke? How about other health habits? Would you be influenced by a friend’s sex life? A neighbor’s? A celebrity’s?
14. Have you ever heard about a disturbing news event, such as a suicide, and worried that others might “get the wrong idea” from it? Do you think you could be personally influenced by a traumatic film, book, or news story?

The Buck Starts Here

15. Have you ever guessed how many jellybeans there are in a jar in order to win a prize? How did you do? Do you think you would guess better or worse if you could see other people’s guesses? Why? If you found a terrific house that was absolutely perfect for your family’s needs but you saw that it had been on the market for 18 months, would you consider passing on it? Should you?
16. How did you get your current job? Did friends help? Were they close friends or acquaintances? Why might close friends be less helpful for finding a job?
17. Does your work environment have a mix of strong and weak ties? How do you think this affects your business and creativity?

Politically Connected

18. Did you vote in the last presidential election? Do you think you might act differently next time if you knew that your election behavior affected others’ votes? Have you tried to change someone’s mind about a political topic, and did you succeed (sooner or later)?
19. Is it good or bad for a politician to be seen as “well connected”? Is it possible to be too well connected?



Connected

20. Do you think blogs, MySpace, Facebook, and Twitter have had an effect on politics? Do they help fat cats or the little guy? Have they made things better or worse? Has such technology changed the nature of our democracy?

It's in Our Nature

21. Do you watch a reality show where people are competing with each other? Have you ever seen a true act of generosity on the show, or do you think everyone is in it for him- or herself? How important is altruism if you want to win one of these games? How important is altruism if you want to win in life?

22. Would you describe yourself as fundamentally selfish or cooperative? How would you describe your family members or co-workers? What is your opinion: do we learn these traits, are we born with them, or is it some combination?

23. If you are religious, is God a member of your social network? Why or why not?

Hyperconnected

24. How far have you travelled in your life? How far did your parents and grandparents travel? Do you think you have more friends as a result of seeing more of the world?

25. How is virtual life different from real life? Do you think others would treat you differently if you had a different appearance? Do you think you would behave differently if you had a different appearance?

26. Do you think the online world has improved or compromised relationships in your life? If so, how so?

27. Do you think people have too many “friends” on Facebook and other online social networking sites? Are these “real” friends? How are we coping with all of this new social activity?

28. Do you trust information on Wikipedia? Is it truthful, or as Stephen Colbert says, just “truthy”? Have massive collaborations like Wikipedia personally affected your life?

The Whole Is Great

29. Can you think of a time when someone helped you in a way that enabled you to help someone else? Is this kind of “pay-it-forward” behavior rare or common? How far do you think one person’s kindness can spread in a social network?



Connected

30. Do social networks help the rich get richer? If so, how can we help people on the edges of these networks keep from falling behind? How do networks help us understand socioeconomic inequality in our society?
31. Do you think social networks are inherently good? If so, why do so many bad things flow through networks (such as disease, misinformation, and violence)? In your own life, do the benefits of connection outweigh the costs?
32. The surprising power of social networks is that we may have less control over our own decisions than we think. But, at the same time, we may have more influence over others than we realize. Is it worth it to know that, while we are influenced by others, we also can have a substantial influence on them – that we are a part of a human superorganism?