

The Proust Questionnaire has its origins in a parlor game popularized by Marcel Proust, the French essayist and novelist, who believed that, in answering these questions, an individual reveals his or her true nature.

Proust questionnaire: Oonagh Zuberbier, MD



What profession might you have pursued, if not for medicine?

Professor of health policy, psychology, or literature. If not in academia at all, something in fashion or the visual arts.

Which talent would you most like to have?

Any musical talent, please—I lack even the most basic capacity.

What do you consider your greatest achievement?

My career, which feels like a true calling. I never dreamed I would have such a fulfilling and blessed life.

What is your idea of perfect happiness?

An all-day hike through alpine meadows with good friends on a beautiful summer day.

Who are your heroes?

Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Abraham Lincoln, Charles Darwin,

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and Jane Goodall. In addition, anyone who stands up to those who hurt, oppress, or exploit.

What is the trait you most deplore in yourself?

Difficulty with effective problem-solving when exhausted or overwhelmed. I depend on others at those times.

What characteristic do your favorite patients share?

Honest self-appraisal.

Which living physician do you most admire?

Any physician working for Médecins Sans Frontières (or similar organization), whom I consider tremendously brave. Any physician doing heavy call, whom I consider tremendously strong.

What are your favorite activities?

Following current national and international events, politics, and economics with passion. Also talking with dear friends, hiking, yoga, and reading.

What is your most marked characteristic?

An enormous capacity for experiencing positive emotions, coupled with intense pragmatism.

What do you most value in your colleagues?

Wisdom, experience, and a willingness to help. And kindness goes a long way!

On what occasion do you lie?

Rare lies of omission at times when complete honesty is futile or destructive.

What medical advance do you most anticipate?

Advances in pharmacogenetics, allowing personalization of medication regimens and rendering multiple, unsuccessful medication trials obsolete.

Who are your favorite writers?

Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, John Steinbeck, Harper Lee, Alexander McCall Smith, George Eliot, William Shakespeare, Henry James, and, for pure entertainment value, J.K. Rowling.

What is your greatest regret?

Opportunities missed due to shyness and reserve.

What is your motto?

I have several: “Show up, do your very best, then let it go and move on,” “Kindness is almost always the answer,” “Virtue is its own reward,” and (my all-time favorite) “Put on your big girl panties and deal with it.”

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