

## THE SONDER SERIES



I moved to New York and asked **100 strangers** the same three questions. This is what they said.

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**100**

INTERVIEWS

**3**

QUESTIONS

**5**

BOROUGHS

**276,749**

WORDS SPOKEN

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For one month, I stopped strangers in parks, on stoops, on sidewalks, and asked each of them the same three questions on a flower microphone.

- 01 "What's your story?"
- 02 "What problem means the most to you?"
- 03 "Who's the most impressive person you've met?"

Unedited. Unrehearsed. **276,749 words** later, the same answers kept surfacing. Here are the patterns.

# "What's your story?"

- **The more momentum someone had in life, the better they told their story.** The settled delivered a clean arc. People mid-transition **stalled, and said so.**
- **Geography came first.** Not a feeling, not a job. A place. "I was born in..." "I moved here from..." New York anchored nearly every story.
- **Almost everyone flinched first.** "That's a hard question." "How do you even begin?" Then they **launched anyway.**

“

*It's hard to talk about your story when you're right in the middle of it.*

GABE · EPISODE 009

# "What problem means the most to you?"

- **Connection won.** Loneliness, empathy, people not listening — the single largest category, **~24% of answers.**
- **The top three were all about people.** After connection came political division (**~1 in 5**) and economic inequality (**~1 in 6**). Climate and tech trailed far behind.
- **People named the problem they'd already lived.** The immigration advocate said decency. The soap founder said clean water. The man in recovery said addiction.

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*We're living through an empathy epidemic.*

HELENA · EPISODE 058

# "Who's the most impressive person you've met?"

- **Almost never a celebrity.** They named a parent, a friend, someone they actually knew.
- What they admired wasn't achievement — it was **transformation.** The person who **decided to become different, and did.**
- Roughly **half named a parent.** The word "mom" appeared **139 times** — more than any other.

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*I would have said a famous person. But now I know they're just human.*

EPISODE 028

# What it took.

<b>100</b> INTERVIEWS	<b>125</b> PEOPLE	<b>32</b> DAYS	<b>30</b> LOCATIONS
<b>20</b> PARKS	<b>5</b> BOROUGHS	<b>~180</b> MILES WALKED	<b>11-86</b> AGE RANGE

**29h 37m** of footage · 377,090 steps · 3 book flower microphones

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# Three words gave them away.

**452** **love** · the emotional core of the whole project

**264** **moved** · almost everyone arrived from somewhere else

**226** **myself** · a project of people turned inward

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But the two themes that mattered most? Barely spoken.

**6** "lonely"      **5** "immigrant"

***People circled what mattered most. They had no clean word for it.***

# Before they left, I asked: "what's your New York challenge for me?"

**"Call someone you love and tell them. Every day for a week."**

FERNANDO · EPISODE 078

**"Ride between the subway cars crossing the Brooklyn Bridge."**

EPISODE 079

**"When you pass someone homeless, stop. Ask what they need. Then buy it."**

JASON · EPISODE 100

**"Don't let the city make you colder."**

EPISODE 084

**"Stand on top of the Empire State Building and see how small you are."**

DEVON · EPISODE 076

# What 100 strangers taught me.

## THREE TAKEAWAYS

**1** To achieve a big goal, break it down.

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**2** A simple smile, and an open eye let you fly anywhere.

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**3** Love is so deeply important. I can't forget this as I continue to climb.

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SON · DER / NOUN

**The realization that every  
passerby has a life as vivid and  
complex as your own.**

100 New Yorkers proved it true.

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**James Floyd**

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*What should I ask the data?*