

Meet the LA man who walks people for a living

Level 1 • Pre-intermediate / Intermediate

1 Warmer

a. Which is a correct answer to the question 'What do you do for a living?'

1. I share a house with two friends.
2. I work in a hospital.
3. My husband, two children and a dog.

b. Now, answer the question with information about yourself.

c. Complete the sentence so it's true for you.

I (often/sometimes/occasionally/rarely ...) go for a walk (in/around ...) ... with ...

2 Key words

Match the key words with the definitions below. Then, find them in the article to read them in context. The paragraph numbers will help you.

confessional

curious

imaginary

response

ability

motivation

1. being able to do something _____ (para 2)
2. not real; only created in your mind _____ (para 3)
3. reactions and replies _____ (para 6)
4. a reason for doing something _____ (para 7)
5. want to find out about something _____ (para 8)
6. telling someone about bad or embarrassing things that you have done _____ (para 9)

coordinate

interaction

isolated

rate

recruited

therapeutic

7. making you feel better or calmer _____ (para 9)
8. employed _____ (para 11)
9. say how good or bad something is _____ (para 13)
10. organize or arrange things such as meetings _____ (para 14)
11. alone and unhappy _____ (para 14)
12. being with and talking to other people _____ (para 14)

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'We need human interaction': meet the LA man who walks people for a living

Rory Carroll

14 September, 2016

- 1 Chuck McCarthy is an actor who is finding fame as Los Angeles's first people walker.
- 2 He walks humans for \$7 a mile around the streets and park near his home. He offers a new alternative to dog walking that requires just an ability to walk, talk and, above all, listen.
- 3 The actor first thought of the idea as a joke, an imaginary way to make extra cash, until it became real.
- 4 "The more I thought about it, the less crazy it seemed," said McCarthy.
- 5 On his T-shirt, he has written: The People Walker. This is cheap, mobile advertising. "I've been doing walks almost every single day for the past week and I'm getting clients who are coming back, which is what you want."
- 6 A walk with this soft-spoken large man seems to be what people in LA want judging by the response to his Facebook page and homemade flyers.
- 7 "Need motivation to walk?" the flyers ask. "Scared to walk alone at night? Don't like walking alone at all? Don't want people to see you walking alone and just think you have no friends? Don't like listening to music or podcasts but can't walk alone in silence, forced to face thoughts of the unknown future?"
- 8 For many, the answer to one or all of the above seems to be "yes". McCarthy is receiving hundreds of emails from the lonely, the curious and the adventurous, all looking for a stranger's company on a walk.
- 9 "I try to listen more than talk," he said. Conversations with clients are not usually confessional but he respects secrets. "It's mostly small talk. But I think it's therapeutic even if they're not telling me everything about their lives."
- 10 Complaining about traffic, for instance, feels better when told to an actual human rather than posted on social media. "Tweeting about traffic and getting no response just makes you feel sadder."
- 11 McCarthy has so many requests for walks that he has recruited five other walkers to walk in different parts of LA. He will not take any money from their earnings until he works out a professional business model.
- 12 It could grow fast. A woman in Israel has copied the idea, someone in Britain wants him to do it there and a man in New York asked him to walk his eight-year-old son to the bus stop each day.
- 13 McCarthy is thinking about paying someone to design an app like Uber, which would let walkers and clients rate each other.
- 14 According to McCarthy, paying to be walked does not mean people are friendless. It just means they cannot always coordinate leisure time with friends, which leaves them isolated. "We're on phones and computers constantly communicating but we're not connecting as much. We need that human interaction."
- 15 We also need exercise. McCarthy has lost weight since starting the professional walking. But he says that he is not a personal trainer. "I motivate people to leave their houses and walk. I don't want to shout at them."

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3 Comprehension check

Are these sentences about the article true (T) or false (F)? Correct any that are false.

1. McCarthy is an actor.
2. He currently lives and works in New York.
3. He walks with people for free.
4. His idea of walking people started as a joke.
5. The people that McCarthy walks do not have any friends.
6. Some people tell him their secrets.
7. Mostly, he talks with his clients about everyday things.
8. Walking with clients makes McCarthy feel safe and less alone in the world.

4 Two-word expressions

a. Use the words to make two-word expressions from the article.

above

than

fame

all

find

rather

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

b. Write the expressions next to their meanings.

1. most importantly
2. instead of
3. become well known

c. Use the expressions to complete the sentences.

1. Although he's an actor, Chuck McCarthy is starting to _____ in his new job.
2. A people walker needs to be able to walk and talk but, _____, they should be a good listener.
3. Chuck tries to motivate people _____ shout at them and make them do things they don't want to do.

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5 Discussion

- Would you ever employ a people walker for yourself or for someone you know?
- What would you want to know about the people walker before you employed them?
Is she/he ... ? Can she/he ... ? Where did she/he ... ? etc
- Could this business model be successful where you live? Why? Why not?
- Would you be a good people walker? Why? Why not?

6 Webquest

You can find photos of the people walker here: www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/sep/14/los-angeles-people-walker-chuck-mccarthy.

Would you like to go for a walk with him? Does he look as you imagined he would?

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KEY

1 Warmer

- a. 2

2 Key words

1. ability
2. imaginary
3. response
4. motivation
5. curious
6. confessional
7. therapeutic
8. recruited
9. rate
10. coordinate
11. isolated
12. interaction

4 Two-word expressions

- a.
1. above all
 2. find fame
 3. rather than

- b.
1. above all
 2. rather than
 3. find fame

- c.
1. find fame
 2. above all
 3. rather than

3 Comprehension check

1. T
2. F – He currently lives and works in **Los Angeles**.
3. F – He walks with people for **\$7 a mile**.
4. T
5. F – The people that McCarthy walks do not **find it easy to meet their** friends.
6. T
7. T
8. F – Walking with **McCarthy** makes **his clients** feel safe and less alone in the world.