

**INTERVIEW INSPIRED BY: THE LIFE STORY INTERVIEW (Dan P. McAdams, Northwestern University)**

Project: E-MOTION - potential of hypersensitivity (2018-1-PL01-KA201-051033)

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**Name/nickname: C.V.**

**Age: 43**

**Gender: Female**

**City/Country: Bucharest/Romania**

**Vocation: Psychological Counselor**

### **Initial comments**

This interview will concern the history of your life. I want to ask you to play the role of a storyteller who talks about their own life, to create a story about your own past, your present and what you expect in the future. Your story should tell how you are similar to other people, and how unique you are as a highly sensitive person.

The purpose of the interviews is to collect and organize various life stories of highly sensitive people. The interview will consist of several parts.

The interview begins with general things and comes to details. I think you'll enjoy taking part in the interview. For most people it is a positive experience.

## **I. LIFE CHAPTERS**

I want you to start with thinking about your life as a book that contains a story about your life. All stories have their characters, scenes, plots, heroes and villains. A longer story may consist of several chapters. Think about your life as a story that has at least a few different chapters. What are they? Give each chapter a title and briefly describe its general content, as if you were to briefly summarize the action of each of them. There may be as many chapters as you want, but I suggest a minimum of two or three chapters, and a maximum of seven.

### **Chapter 1. *Escaping in my mind***

As I see and understand now, with my knowledge and inner development, I can say that I grew up in a family surrounded frequently by the clouds of the anxiety and worry. I've had this perception since childhood, but I couldn't translate it into words, it was just a feeling of an emotional load that usually weighted me down.

### **Chapter 2. *School – studies – Tough reality***

Even if I was a pretty good student since elementary school, I didn't enjoy it that much, it was a new stress source for me, due to the feeling of being constant evaluated.

### **Chapter 3. *Who should I be?***

My professional path was pretty complex, moving from kindergarten teacher, to project management in a technical company, and then psychotherapy.

I studied a lot in the psychological domain and I was always passionate to understand more... to understand the depths, always obsessed to go deeper and finding answers to the “why's”. I also felt the need that my work should be meaningful. And I was also guided by the need to validate my own insights, my feelings, my experiences, my observations of myself and others.

### **Chapter 4. *Freedom to connect***

Since I was a child I was always interested in authentic connection, and I remember I was very surprised watching people how they try to hide their own vulnerability through harsh behaviours and superficial interactions.

### **Chapter 5. *My secret garden***

My inner world usually gravitates around the idea of romantic love, nature, colours, artistic expression, and peace. But right now it's a little overwhelmed and hidden by some reality aspects.

## II. KEY MEMORIES

Now that you have sketched out the outline of the chapters, I would like you to focus on a few important memories from your life story.

### Memory #1

#### Childhood

The nicest moments in my childhood were always related to nature, because I've spent each summer holiday in a country side surrounded by forests, and hills, and green all over. That gave me a feeling of freedom and curiosity to explore. I was also preoccupied to understand things, I was frequently asking myself all kind of questions, like "why do we dream? What is a dream? What is reality? Why do people act like they do?".

The most difficult experiences happened pretty often – my grandmother being ill, and moody, and me always witnessing her suffering, and being worried almost all the time.

I think I was similar to other kids regarding the need to play, to explore, but since I wasn't allowed to play with friends outside my yard, I used more my imagination to daydream. As a difference from my peers, I was usually more serious and conscientious.

I don't remember being proud of something, usually my enjoyment from the things that I managed to do well was quickly reduced by the remarks or moods of the family.

What I found difficult for me in my childhood was to integrate in a group, and to have a special best friend...

Looking back I would like to see how I would have developed in a different, more loving, happy, and emotionally secure environment.

### Memory # 2

#### Education

I was usually much stressed to perform well in school and not disappoint my family. This was something like a continuous pressure that didn't allowed me to enjoy my studies. I liked to write beautiful things and to read a lot, because this gave me a nice way to experience positive emotions.

I was like my peers in my need for freedom, in my emotional needs, but I also felt being different from them, more aware of the consequences of the actions and behaviours, and also more cautious.

I don't recall being proud of something, I was rather shy, but underneath I longed for connection. The main difficulty was related to social situations, I felt like an outsider, I felt inferior at the social level, I usually experienced the feeling of not belonging.

I would have liked to receive more support from family and to experience the feeling of inner freedom.

### Memory # 3

#### Professional work

I loved to discover and finding validation of my intuitions. But, being a perfectionist and pushing myself all the time to do more, and more, I ended up in burnout. The tendency to overanalyse got me to exhausting the energy of my mind.

The inclination that I have, to go deeper, made me feel frustrated by the professional relationships that usually were pretty superficial.

I enjoyed very much when I shared through the articles that I wrote, the psychological explanations that I found through the meaningful correlations between behaviours, feelings, and personal history of people. It was (and still is) difficult to not overwork my mind, and to learn how to loosen up.

Even if it was pretty hard to accommodate with the different requests and responsibilities that came along with my professional path, I think that maybe this was necessary for me to understand myself better and discover what really suits me.

### Memory # 4

#### My family, friends, loved ones

Honesty, kindness, and deep connection are the things that I value most in all relationships. The main thing that I feel difficult in my relationships is when the deep emotional connection is lost.

For a very long time I embraced the role of the saviour, the caregiver. I think this is due to my overused empathy since I was a child, being raised by a grandmother who was constantly in some sort of suffering. I tend to take things too seriously, and I pay attention maybe too much to the profoundness of my relationships.

I love to share moments of soulful communication and I love when the emotional atmosphere is one of peace, harmony and joy.

My obsessive need to explain myself in order to feel understood, and seen in my vulnerability.

## Memory # 5

### My inner world

I think “home” for me is a feeling, a feeling of ease, of “no pressure”.

I enjoy exploring my artistic side, through colours and forms, and elements of nature.

Because I’ve always been attracted to colours. And because I find it fascinating to contribute to the vibration of beauty in this world.

## III. THEME

I can say that my story is one of continuous discovery of myself; I can summarize it as “becoming myself”. Even if I really like precision and clarity, when it comes to express specific things about how do I see myself in the future or how can I define my past, I don’t feel the need to be very concise, to capture it into limited words, but to let it flow and reveal itself gradually.