

READINGS: QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

by Richard Webster [©2007]

Every now and again, I hear from people who are thinking about giving readings. Here are some of the most interesting questions I've been asked, followed by my replies. I'd like to thank everyone who has sent me a question. I'm thrilled to learn that people are not only reading my books, but are using the information.

I've read lots of books on cold reading, and become totally confused. I've memorized a script, and that works well when I'm reading for one person. How can I expand on this when I'm reading for a group of people?

Unfortunately, a lot of the material available on cold reading has been written by people who have never done it in the real world. Rather than learn a script, it would have been better to have bought a book on palmistry, the Tarot, or whatever "ology" you wish to do, and learned a system. That way, everyone you read for will automatically receive a personalized reading. My favourite system is palmistry. There are many reasons for this, but convenience is one of the main ones. With palmistry, you can give a reading anywhere, at any time. Yes, there is a bit of learning involved, but you don't need to know everything when you start. If palmistry appeals to you, start by learning a bit about hand shapes, and then read up on the heart line. There are two major types of heart line and four basic hand shapes (only six things to learn!). If you tell people you're starting to learn palmistry, you'll have an endless supply of people wanting you to look at their hands. Tell them about their hand shapes and their heart lines. You can also, perfectly honestly, say you can't tell them anything else, as you're still learning. Once you have looked at ten or twenty heart lines and know what the basics are, learn about the head line. Then you can go out and tell people about their hand shapes, heart lines, and head lines. Once you can do this, learn something more, and continue doing so until you have learned how to read an entire palm. By doing it this way, you'll gradually—and effortlessly—learn a system that will stand you in good stead for the rest of your life.

How do you satisfy, in just five minutes, a customer who pays \$5 or \$10 and expects a longer and more comprehensive reading? Some practically refuse to relinquish the chair, wanting more time and information.

This shouldn't be a problem, if the person knows in advance that the reading will be, say, five minutes long. With palmistry readings, it is easy to at least touch on all the important things in a person's life in five minutes. The heart line covers love and relationships. The head line, the intellect. Life line, health and longevity. Destiny line, career and direction of person's life. Then there are relationship lines, travel lines, intuition lines, money triangle, worry lines, etc. The thumb and fingers provide five more areas to cover. Consequently, by the time the reading is over, pretty well every area of life has been discussed, albeit briefly.

If the person expects, or wants, more, I'd give them my business card so they could contact me for a private reading. When I stopped giving private readings myself, I

gave them another reader's business card. I usually had several to choose from, as private readers are always happy when someone offers to promote their businesses for free. Naturally, I wouldn't hand out anyone's card. I always vetted the readers first, sometimes by having a reading from them myself, or by having a lengthy chat with them to satisfy myself that they were ethical and honest.

I usually finish quick readings by placing my right palm face down on his or her face-up palm, and saying, "You have a fascinating palm. I wish we had time to look at it in more detail." I then smile at the person and say, "Thank you." Most people take the hint at that point. If they don't, I stand up to signify the reading is over. Very occasionally, if the person remains seated, I'd gesture for the next person to come forward for a reading.

How do you satisfy a troubled sitter who thrusts out her hand, again at a five-minute reading, and demands, "Will my husband stop hitting me?", "Should I have the abortion?", or some other tortuous question?

Alas, you'll sometimes get one or two of these people while giving quick readings. My stock answer is to say, "Unfortunately, I can't answer that specifically with just a quick look at your hand, but, speaking generally, your future is a lot happier than the recent past, so the long term outlook is good. It's very positive, in fact. I see you making a few changes and adjustments, initially in your mind, but later in actuality, and these changes have a positive effect on every area of your life." After that, I continue with a normal palm reading, using the information I've been given when it seems appropriate. If the person asks for it, I'll give them a business card at the end of the reading. When I did private readings, I found numerology was the most helpful tool for answering difficult questions.

Many years ago, I was giving quick readings at a company Christmas party, and had a long line of people wanting my services. The wife of the CEO sat down, and in a loud voice told me, and a few dozen other people, that her husband was having an affair and should she leave him? I can't remember exactly what I told her, as it was so long ago, but I suggested that she shouldn't rush into a quick decision. She should take time out to think what she herself wanted. She should then have a serious chat with her husband about the whole situation. Once she had done that, everything would be much clearer, and she'd know which path to take. I suggested that she phone me if she wanted the name of a good marriage guidance counsellor. She didn't call me, but one year later I was again booked to do readings for the same company. The CEO and his wife were both there, and were still husband and wife. As far as I know, they're still together.

People tell me that readings are not entertainment. If this were true, how come people would rather have a reading than see a card trick? I work as a close-up magician and have spent years learning my skills. I'm annoyed that a Tarot card reader, who is not very good, is more popular than me.

I think quick, five-minute readings can be entertaining, and consequently could be described as "entertainment." People would rather have a reading than watch magic, as they're interested in hearing something that's personal and applicable to them. They want to hear good news about themselves. They want to know they're going to

be happy in the future. Unfortunately, no matter how good an entertainer you may be, you can't compete with that. For twenty plus years, I regularly worked at functions doing quick readings. Many of these functions employed close-up magicians as well. At the end of the allotted time, the magicians were told to go, and almost always, I was kept on for another hour or two. The local magicians hated me for this, but it was not a reflection on their skills. It was purely because I was telling people what they wanted to hear. That is much more powerful than any four-ace trick.

I'm worried about charging for my readings. Has anyone ever asked you for their money back?

Yes. When I started out in this business I offered everyone a money-back guarantee — for shows as well as readings. I've been taken advantage of a couple of times because of this, but overall the policy has paid off handsomely. There have also been a few occasions when I felt I hadn't done a good enough job, and declined to charge a fee. On one occasion, I had to do a hypnotism show in a long narrow room. I was placed in the middle, which meant that people sitting at tables close to the centre could see the show, but people further away couldn't. Although I felt I'd done a good job under the circumstances, I did not charge the company for the show, even though they were fully prepared to pay. Since then, that company has booked me several times, and made sure I had a good performing area each time. On another occasion, I was booked to perform magic at a trade show for a new magazine. Unfortunately, the booth was tiny and the show received so many visitors that people were virtually pushed along the aisles. I did the best I could, but decided not to charge for my services. That little magazine is now a big magazine, and they have published three feature articles about me over the years. I'm sure this is because I did not charge them when they were just starting out. Do I offer a money-back guarantee on readings? Yes, although I don't publicize the fact. It's easier to refund an unhappy person's money than it is to argue with them. I want my customers to be happy, and I also want to sleep comfortably in bed at night. Many years ago, someone ordered an astrological chart from me. I prepared it and posted it to him. A couple of days later, it came back with a request for a refund. He gave no reason for sending it back. I guess I could have argued about it, but what's the point? I sent him a refund by return mail.

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