“…we got some smart feedback from Joe Sexton, the Metro editor, about seeking to expand the emotional range of the stories, to try and capture the inevitable loneliness and sadness that exists amid the vitality and charm. And just recently, a blog offered [an interesting critique](http://ubyssey.ca/clog/2009/07/30/everyone-will-get-their-15-minutes-of-weirdness-david-lynchs-interview-project-vs-nyts-one-in-8-million/) of the project that said our profiles are "predictably laced with an overwhelmingly hopeful message"

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/03/business/media/03askthetimes.html?pagewanted=all#latest>

"The pieces in this series will be reflective, amusing, informative or surprising. They will not be about accomplishments or facts but instead about a person's passions, dreams, struggles and the stories that make up a life. The collection will capture the spirit of the city and its residents, spanning age, borough, race, religion and economic class." We are looking for people who are thoughtful and open, who have a unique perspective, who one wants to listen to and listen to some more.

…There are still many neighborhoods and stories unturned, and we are constantly working to make sure the profiles, will, in total, create a portrait of this city (one of many possible portraits), while each story is complete on its own.

…One of the great pleasures of this project has been the passion of its audience. One of my favorite letters put it this way: “Thank you for this wonderful collection. I thought I would look at one or two of them, but soon found myself going through each and every one. They are a reminder of beauty in ordinariness, they teach us how all kinds of lives — old and young, learned and unlearned, strange and mundane — have an intrinsic value and deserve to be honored. They also urged me to look beyond the surface of people's lives and find hidden there an individuality and an authenticity that is quietly heroic. In this world of hyper-achievement and celebrity status, these vignettes help to validate what is real.”

…Sarah Kramer and Alexis Mainland: Eileen, the pre-interview process can take place over the phone or in person. The main goal is to get to know the potential subject better — and that's what we tell them.

— so we're asking all sorts of questions and listening carefully. Sometimes we begin a conversation thinking that if the person works out, for example, it's going to be a piece about becoming an American citizen, but 10 minutes into it, it's clear that [his fear of heights](http://www.nytimes.com/packages/html/nyregion/1-in-8-million/index.html) is the main story. Sometimes we head into an initial conversation imagining all the possibilities for a piece and then the subject is really only able to answer questions with a "yes" or "no." We're looking for what makes the subject tick, something ineffable, a spark. When you're writing an article, you can fill in all sorts of important details around a subject's quotes as well as tease out scenes. When you're working with audio, you're relying on the speaker to do all that work — to lead you through the story. And usually people we talk to are willing to be interviewed but sometimes at first they're not. In those cases, the pre-interview is also a way of allowing the potential subjects get to know us, too, and make sure this is something they're interested in doing.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/03/business/media/03askthetimes.html?pagewanted=all>