



# Chip Conley, Hospitality Entrepreneur Daring to Be Yourself

## Lesson Introduction

**Interview Log:** Interviewed on April 16, 2024 by Karin Sheil

- Access *The Thread* episode of Chip Conley on our [YouTube channel](#) or at [LifeStories.org](#) and download the transcript [here](#)
- Access his long-form interview on [LifeStories.org](#)

## Learning Objectives

### Social Studies Focus

- Reflect on the role of family and other early influences in identity formation
- Understand entrepreneurship through one story of a successful business owner
- Explore different ideas of career evolution, passion, and personal growth

### English Language Arts Focus

- Examine perspective taking from the point of view of one entrepreneur
- Analyze the structure and purpose of a narrative, identify key themes in the episode, and synthesize information from a spoken text
- Analyze the theme of adversity and resilience
- Discuss different perspectives on the title “Daring To Be Yourself”
- Explore the idea of purposeful work and a meaningful life
- Use the title of Chip Conley’s to write a rhetorical essay on an assigned topic

## Episode Overview

Chip Conley, author and entrepreneur, takes us through his life’s journey from growing up in California, through his years at Stanford, to going out on his own at the age of 26 and building the second largest boutique hotel company in America. After tremendous success as a hotelier, he became the Head of Global Hospitality & Strategy at Airbnb and today is working on a new venture, the Modern Elder Academy. This episode of *The Thread* is a conversation with Chip Conley, a creative entrepreneur and someone who continues to help others find purpose and meaning.



## Biography

Chip Conley is a hospitality entrepreneur and innovator reshaping society’s view of aging. Born in Orange, California in 1960, he earned his BA and MBA from Stanford and at the age of 26 founded the first Joie de Vivre Hotel in San Francisco. Conley’s passion for reinvention took him to Airbnb where in 2013 he became its Head of Global Hospitality & Strategy. Drawing from his experience as a ‘modern elder’ at Airbnb, he co-founded the world’s first “midlife wisdom school”, the Modern Elder Academy (MEA) dedicated to career and life transitions. A New York Times bestselling author, his book *Learning to Love Midlife*, published in 2024, redefines how we think about our 40s, 50s, and 60s. Conley has earned the Pioneer Award (one of hospitality’s highest honors), was named Most Innovative CEO by the San Francisco Business Times, and is a three-time TED talk speaker. He has an honorary doctorate from Saybrook University, and serves on the boards of Encore.org and the Stanford Center for Longevity.

Photo: Chip with stacks of books (Chip Conley)



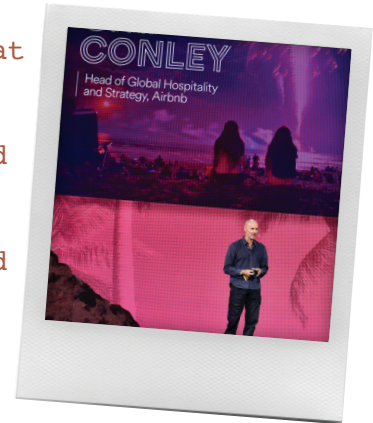
## Teaching Tip: First Take

A **First Take** is a warm-up writing or conversation exercise created uniquely for *The Thread* that strengthens media literacy skills. Like an opening song in a musical, the first stanza of a poem, or even the first impression one person makes on another, the First Take asks students to reflect and share their initial thoughts and feelings about the episode's opening.

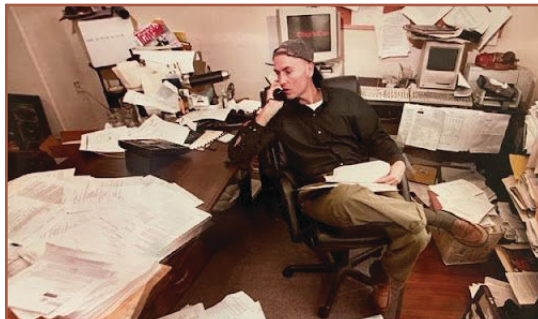
### Suggested Steps

- ▣ **Watch and then read aloud** the opening of Chip Conley's episode with students:

"I like to ask questions at cocktail parties where I say like, so what are you a beginner at these days? And people look at me like, what are you talking about? There's a guy named Peter Drucker, famous management theorist, and he had a practice that every 2 to 3 years: he would study something new that had nothing to do with being a business school professor. And he felt like that curiosity was an elixir for his life. And, you know, the man lived till age 94. He wrote two thirds of his 40 books after the age of 65. So there's no doubt in my mind that learning how to be curious in the beginning again is sort of its own form of a fountain of youth."



- ▣ **Ask and Discuss:** What do you learn about Chip Conley from the opening of his episode? What insights can you infer?
- ▣ **Next,** as a class, discuss the role of "the opening" in any form of storytelling – an interview, film, play, or song. What is their point of view on why the filmmakers chose this as the opening for the episode? What ideas, topics, or themes may the filmmakers be foreshadowing?
- ▣ **Last,** have students do a one-minute quick write reflecting on how this opening connects with the episode's title, "Daring to Be Yourself." Then, have students get into pairs and share their thoughts and feelings.



**Photos:** Photos: Airbnb Promotional Event. (Chip Conley) top; Chip Conley at work in his 30s. (Chip Conley) lower left; Beach sticks and stones. (Chip Conley) lower right



## Teaching Tip:

# The Thread Up Close

**Step One:** Watch Chip Conley’s episode “Daring to Be Yourself” here.

Next, have students discuss and debrief the episode using these suggested questions:

- ❑ Chip Conley shares his journey of trying to conform to others’ expectations and then choosing to break away. How did it make you feel, and how did you respond?
- ❑ How do you define curiosity? What did you learn about curiosity from Chip Conley?
- ❑ What new skills or ideas have you explored recently? How has this enriched your life? What have you learned about risk-taking from Chip Conley?
- ❑ After surviving a medical crisis, Chip Conley recalls reading three powerful sentences from Viktor Frankel’s *Man’s Search for Meaning*. “Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.”
  - ❑ How do you interpret this quote?
  - ❑ In what ways did this passage influence Chip Conley?
- ❑ Chip Conley chose to take professional risks early in his career which led him in midlife to be part of the successful start-up AirBnB. He described his role as a mentor within the company. What did you learn about the importance of mentorship from his story?
- ❑ What big lessons do you walk away with after listening to this episode?

**Step Two:** After discussing the questions in Step One, have students return to **The Thread** episode and engage in a close read and analysis of his interview using the transcript and video as a reference. Depending on the lesson, question, or theme you are aligning **The Thread** with, have students annotate the transcript, select passages that reflect the assignment, and explain their reasoning in class.

Here is an example of a **Thread** lesson connection on the theme “Daring To Be Yourself” (edited for clarity and brevity):

“I liked my business school classmates individually, but as a group it felt a little bit like they were conventional and conformist and Type-A. I was looking in the mirror and I was having a hard time looking in the mirror. This is who I could be two, four, six years from now because they’re all older than me and I didn’t like it.”

### Connections: The Thread Up Close

- ❑ How do you interpret the title of this episode, “Dare To Be Yourself”? What are all the ways that Chip Conley forged his own path?
- ❑ Can you recall a moment when you felt pressured to conform? How did that affect you?
- ❑ Share a time when you embraced who you truly are. What led to that moment?
- ❑ What new insight did you learn about (yourself, your community, your world) from his stories?
- ❑ How do you understand the title after watching this episode? What new or surprising insights about daring to be different did you learn as a result of Chip Conley’s career and point of view?





### Activity: Daring to Be Yourself

Chip Conley’s THREAD episode moves from a rich coming-of-age story to an adult life filled with creativity, confidence, risk taking, skill, talent, and tremendous success as an entrepreneur.

- Have students write about a significant moment when they dared to be themselves or a time they learned the value of authenticity in their lives.

**Extended learning:** Write a rhetorical argument expanding on the title of Chip Conley’s episode. How do you dare to be yourself? What character traits are involved? Do you interpret this as an invitation or a declarative statement?



**Photos:** Chip with mom and sister when he was a toddler. (Chip Conley) *top left*; Chip as a young adult shaking hands in front of car. (Chip Conley) *top left*; Promotional image, Phoenix Hotel. (Chip Conley) *lower left*; A view across the dust covered camps at Burning Man. (2checkingout) *lower right*



#### Additional Resources

- Explore Chip Conley’s many books [here](#)
- Watch Conley’s 2019 TED Talk “[Becoming A Modern Elder](#)”
- Learn more about his work at to grow the [Modern Elder Academy](#)

