

Curious about Curiosity?

What confuses you? What intrigues you? What interests you? What motivates you? What do you wish you knew more about? Who? How? Why? When? Where? What? These six words are the best friends of curiosity!

The basis or foundation of curiosity is being inquisitive and asking lots and lots of questions. Humans are naturally curious and this is most evident in very young children who use all of their senses to explore as they begin the learning process. They learn rapidly, they learn with enthusiasm and they are open to learning anything and everything. Bruce D. Perry, M.D., Ph.D. is an internationally recognized authority on brain development and children in crisis and he firmly believes curiosity is the “fuel of development”. He strongly suggests that the cycle of learning must begin with curiosity:

Curiosity	results in	Exploration
Exploration	results in	Discovery
Discovery	results in	Pleasure
Pleasure	results in	Repetition
Repetition	results in	Mastery
Mastery	results in	New skills
New skills	results in	Confidence
Confidence	results in	Self esteem
Self esteem	results in	Sense of security
Security	results in	More exploration

Having curiosity therefore is asking, investigating, observing, wanting to learn and continually seeking answers.

But curiosity fades or is stifled in many children primarily because we as adults stifle or in some cases actually crush any enthusiastic exploration. The three most common ways this is done are:

- **Fear:** when the child’s environment is chaotic or when the child is stressed he/she will not explore novelty but will instead seek a comfort zone.
- **Disapproval:** some of the most common phrases children receive from us all begin with the words “Don’t...” For example: Don’t touch, Don’t climb, Don’t listen, Don’t take that apart, Don’t get dirty, etc., etc.
- **Absence:** The presence of an attentive, caring and interactive adult provides a sense of safety and security enabling the child to seek and try new things. Your attentiveness also provides the positive reinforcement needed for all the steps in the above cycle. As grandparents, this is a key role we can provide as the child’s parents are often overwhelmed with the daily demands of multiple roles and this is intensified in single parent homes.

Albert Einstein said: “I have no special talents. I am only passionately curious.” and “The important thing is not to stop questioning as one should never lose a holy curiosity.” Walt Disney said: “When you’re curious you find lots of interesting things to do.” Both have been referred to as geniuses in their fields and psychologists agree that curiosity is an important trait of the genius mind.

But chances are you and I are not referred to by others as in the genius category of intelligence nor are we in the stage of our lives focusing on educational efforts. So why should curiosity still be practiced and still be important to us? Donald Latumahina thinks there are four main benefits:

- **It makes your mind active instead of passive.** Since the mind is like a muscle which becomes stronger through continual exercise and use, the mental exercise caused by curiosity makes your mind stronger, creates new brain cells and improves brain use.
- **It makes your mind observant to new ideas.** When you are curious about something your mind expects and anticipates new ideas related to it. When the ideas come they will soon be recognized. Without curiosity, the ideas may pass right in front of you and yet you miss them because your mind is not prepared to recognize them. Just think, how many great ideas may have been lost due to lack of curiosity? Be prepared to change and to challenge your mind.
- **It opens up new worlds and possibilities.** By being curious you will be able to learn about things that normally you would just overlook. It takes a curious mind to look in different places, to try new experiences, to try new venues. Don't label something as boring because you have not explored it.
- **It brings excitement into your life.** The life of curious people is far from boring. It's never dull nor routine as there are always new things that attract their attention because they tune in to all of their senses. Curious people have an adventurous life, often report they have more fun in life and they are generally more tolerant.

Curiosity and learning go hand in hand and fortunately there are a lot of good, practical and often inexpensive ways to make learning something new a part of our daily routines. The Delta College 50+...Just Like Gold program offers monthly "Bits and Bites" sessions (the format is a bit of information with a bite to eat) that will introduce you to new topics, new options and new information. You are invited to attend these meetings but please call in advance as reservations are necessary and there is a small charge for food. The June 18th meeting at Delta College will focus on *Chisenbop* which is essentially a method of doing basic arithmetic using your fingers. This counting method is very old and attributed to the Korean tradition and has some similarities to the abacus. As you read the last few sentences about *Chisenbop* were you thinking something like "Why do I need to know that?" or "I already know how to do arithmetic so this doesn't interest me."

Use your curiosity and change your thoughts to something like "It might be fun to learn something new and to do so with other people." or "I could learn something that I could share with my grandchildren the next time I see them." Yes, there are often a lot of good, practical reasons to challenge yourself to learn something new but the best reasons really have nothing to do with practicality. The lifelong experiences of learning are what make us uniquely human and our lives worthwhile. Curiosity not only makes life worthwhile and interesting, it makes you a more interesting person!

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