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Curiosity

by Diane Hamilton



We keep moving forward, opening new doors, and doing new things because we're curious and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths.

- Walt Disney



What Is Curiosity?

In the workforce, curiosity is a tool that we can utilize to increase our productivity and success. Curiosity is a fundamental element in discovering solutions to problems, learning to adapt and survive, pursuing our passions and roaming outside of our comfort zone.

The question is...

How do we overcome the things that hold us back from developing our natural curiosity?

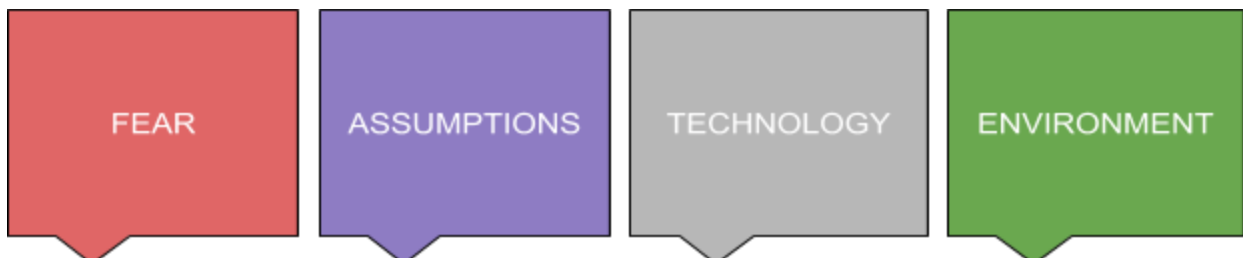
Let's explore this together.

In this guide I have outlined some key factors that hold our curiosity hostage and have outlined actionable steps to start overcoming those barriers. It is time to start utilizing and developing your curiosity and grow your career in the process.

Factors That Keep Our Curiosity Hostage

We are often told to follow our passion. Even if we determine our passion, some things hold us back from pursuing our natural sense of curiosity. Curiosity has been called a sort of 'mental itch'. There are surprisingly few studies regarding measuring curiosity because it is such a broad topic. Some people are more naturally curious than others. It can be important to have curiosity hardwired into us because it helps us grow and develop.

There are factors like stress, aging, drugs, genetics, etc. that could impact our level of curiosity. Outside of medical issues or lack of financial capabilities, I have found four major things that hold people's curiosity hostage, which create the acronym of FATE:





Fear

Let's start with fear. When discussing fear associated with pursuing curiosity, it might seem counterintuitive because pursuing new things can make us feel good. Science has demonstrated that when we pursue things that spark our curiosity, we receive a rush of dopamine, a neurotransmitter which influences many brain systems including cognition. It is our reward for the experience. Curiosity can help us be happier and increase our level of empathy. However, we also ignite cortisol. A little cortisol can encourage curious behavior, but a lot of it can also create a back-away response.

What do you think is the root of why certain activities make you feel uncomfortable? (Ex. past bad experience, time pressure). Try to list 3 factors that might be coming into play.

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3



The factor of time can impact the balance of positive and negative outcomes associated with curiosity. In a research study, people were told that they could watch a video. Half of the group was told they could watch it after one minute, the other half after a 30-minute delay. Both groups were curious about the content on the video; however, those who had to wait longer had more negative feelings associated with their curiosity.

Motivation only works if you are not anxious about the result. We must feel safe to increase our level of curiosity and creativity. As people become more curious, dopamine is released, which motivates us to learn more. Therefore, the more curious you are, the more motivated you become to retain new knowledge and skills.

Think of something that you have wanted to try, but fear has gotten in the way. What are the worst things that would happen if you tried them? And how would you handle that?

Something I fear:

Worst that could happen:

How I could handle it:



Imagine what it would be like to let your curiosity free! Here are some tactics you can use to start breaking through the limitations of fear.

Tactics To Try

1. What are the best things that can happen if you try an activity and how would you deal with that? This makes us see the opportunity lost by not trying something new.
2. What do you think is the root of why an activity might make you feel uncomfortable (Example: past bad experience)?
3. What are the worst things that can happen if you try an activity and how would you deal with that? This makes us analyze why things bother us.
4. What are the best things that can happen if you try an activity and how would you deal with that? This makes us see the opportunity lost by not trying something new.

As you gain self-confidence in doing things you normally wouldn't do, begin to add more activities that would normally make you hesitant. Give new activities a reasonable amount of time and exposure to ensure that you have given them a fair shot at being an experience that might interest you. Then, tell other people about your new experiences so that you can overcome the fear of what other people think. Let your curiosity go wild!

Assumptions

Another common reason people avoid curiosity is because they feel comfortable doing things the way they have always done them in the past. In the business world, it is common for leaders to push for a fast solution. This can force people to come up with tried and true ways. However, it can limit curiosity and creativity.

Routine can be healthy and helpful, but it can also be limiting. List 3 things that are routine in your life.

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Is there room to adjust them, to give way for more curiosity?

We also tell ourselves that we do not have time to read and explore new ideas. However, as the world progresses and becomes more innovative, if we do not proactively seek out new information, we will not keep pace. It is important to reward people for exploring new ideas and for asking questions.



In our personal lives, we might make job selections based on what we think is expected of us. Perhaps our family has always been full of engineers, lawyers, doctors, etc. It might be in our mind that we should pursue that same path. Perhaps we tell us ourselves that we must be good at something or that something is meant to be because our lineage demonstrates that.

To break into curiosity, you need to consider what has always been “normal” in your life and challenge whether you want it to be that way.

Ask your relatives about things they wish could have done with their lives, but that they never tried because it was not the ‘norm’ for their family or culture. Do you have any in common? What steps can you take to pursue this curiosity?

Things your relatives wish they had done:

Things your can relate to:

Steps you can take:



Some people have never considered what expectations their family and culture have had for what they should or could do in their life. They don't even know it's affecting them.

Here are some tactics you can use to start breaking through the limitations your mind has set based on the way things have always been done.

Tactics To Try

1. If things seem uninteresting or boring, ask yourself why you believe that.
2. Try incorporating a few things that you had never thought were interesting in the past into your normal activities and pay attention to how they make you feel.
3. Schedule 15 minutes a day on your calendar to do something out of the normal order that you do things. If you normally drive on one street to go home, take a different one to see how the change makes you feel and what you notice along the way.
4. Set aside an extra \$10 a week to put toward trying something new like saving money.

Technology

We are all consumed by technology! Most likely, it has a big presence in your life, and that affects more than you might think.

List 3 devices, apps or other technological items that take up a lot of your time.

1

2

3

What do you do on them? How do they contribute to your life overall?

Technology has led to so many options from which to choose that all generations find it overwhelming to make choices. As generations become more technology-dependent, some of their natural inclination to follow curiosity can be squelched. If computers answer questions, some people do not see the need to find out the 'why' behind the answers.



Technology might also be the thing that dissuades people from learning new things. If learning something requires learning to use a new technology to discover answers, people can feel overwhelmed. Someone who might like to learn more about writing, but has little knowledge about computers and online documents, might not pursue their interest in writing due to the sheer number of steps required.

List 3 things you could do manually instead of using a computer. What are the differences in the way that you feel when you are away from a computer?

Things you could do:

The way you feel:



If you find yourself blocked by technology, here are some tactics you can use to start breaking through.

Tactics To Try

1. Take some time to learn new technology terms by finding some articles or blogs or even Dummies books about the basics of technology. Even the brightest minds could learn more about the basics.
2. Consider the things that computers do for you and think about the steps the computer has to go through to determine an answer for your questions or needs.
3. Research what the most-used or popular apps or software programs are and watch some Youtube videos or website videos about what they do.
4. Ask a friend who has more technology skills to show you a few shortcuts or tricks on a computer to make your life easier.
5. Stop by an Apple or Microsoft store and have their associates show you some of the latest technology and have them explain a few things that it can do for you.
6. If you rely too much on technology, try doing things manually that you would normally have a computer do for you.

Environment

Social pressures can stifle our instincts to be curious. Our families and friends can inadvertently put ideas in our heads that something is inappropriate because they fear the unknown. Social media has caused a lot of people to only share things that will be 'liked' by other people. They might subconsciously worry that showing an interest in something other than the things that others show an interest in could make them look bad.

List 3 natural abilities that your parents or siblings saw in you when you were young that you have not since explored.

1

2

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Try revisiting these abilities. Do they still interest you?



It is a widely-held belief that children are born curious and become discouraged throughout their formal education. As we age, we are told to act certain ways, and that can stifle curiosity and creativity. Teachers might inadvertently have directed their students in ways that pushed the curriculum but stopped a natural form of curiosity that might have led in a completely different direction.

Research indicates that Millennials are the most stressed generation, and have less distress tolerance in the workplace. Because they worry about what others think of them more than other generations, they are less likely to pose new ideas and speak up in meetings. This is also common in marriages, where one person stifles their curiosity for fear of what the other person might think.

Break through it and do it *with* your significant other! List 3 new and exciting hobbies or activities that you and your significant other could do together.

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2

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It's time to stop letting social pressures control your life and stop your curiosity. here are some tactics you can use to overcome the habits.

Tactics To Try

1. Talk to a teacher and ask him or her about how curiosity could be improved in class and what they have to do to keep kids on track with the curriculum. This can help open us up to understanding why our natural sense of curiosity might have not had time to blossom within a structured system.
2. Ask your parents or siblings if they saw any natural abilities in you when you were young that you have not since explored. Try exploring some of them to see if they still interest you.
3. Tell your friends and family about some of the things you want to try to proactively prepare them so that they don't criticize your ideas.
4. Tell your leader that you are actively trying to improve your productivity by being more curious and ask if it will be OK if you ask more questions than usual.
5. Ask questions at work that give you insight as to how what you do leads to the overall objectives of the company.
6. Ask your significant other to join you in a new hobby or activity.

Summary

Now that you know the factors that could be holding your creativity hostage, it is up to you to determine whether you will allow that to continue. Knowing the possibilities that exist can give us a sense of exhilaration. The adage that nothing ventured nothing gained was meant to point out the importance of expanding our horizons. The more you develop your natural sense of curiosity, the more doors can open to your success. Even the greatest minds new the importance of being open to possibilities.

Ways I'd like to start being more curious:

1.

2.

3.

As Albert Einstein said: "I am neither especially clever nor especially gifted...I am only very, very curious."