

Banish stress

Move over IQ: Studies show our “CQ,” or curiosity quotient, is a better predictor of success and fulfillment—and experts say you can develop it to instantly tame stress and usher in joy and gratitude!

Have you ever noticed the way a child’s eyes light up when she finds something fascinating? Or felt a thrill when you’ve tried a delicious new dish or visited a beautiful city for the first time? Scientists have labeled that rush of wonder, and the innate desire to know, feel and experience more, our curiosity quotient or “CQ.” And unlike IQ, we can consciously raise our CQs to help melt anxiety and increase happiness.

Curiosity is so mood-boosting, in fact, it passes what may be the ultimate test: It’s as satisfying as *chocolate*. “Scientists studying the curiosity gene in birds discovered that the happiness chemical dopamine—unleashed when we eat chocolate, for example—was released when the birds showed curiosity,” explains Diane Hamilton, Ph.D., author of *Cracking the Curiosity Code*.

Our feathered friends aren’t the only ones getting a jolt of joy from exploring life outside their nests. One recent study revealed that folks ages 60 to 85 who were more curious lived longer than their less inquisitive counterparts.

“There are two types of curiosity,” reveals Kristin M. Rouleau, Ed.D., co-author of *Curiosity Works*. “The first is *state* curiosity, confined to a specific goal, like finding the answer to a question. The second is *trait* curiosity—general inquisitiveness about the world around you.” This second type of curiosity is what can be easily nurtured to usher in more joy and peace. Read on to learn how to cultivate *your* CQ!



with the new “IQ”!

SUFFERED A SETBACK?

You zero in on an exciting job listing...only to learn that the position was just filled. Crestfallen, you find your desire to explore new jobs beginning to fade. “Curiosity ignites drive and ambition,” says Hamilton. “One study revealed that workers who showed more curiosity earned *twice* as many promotions as their less inquisitive colleagues.” But when we meet a setback, she says, that spark dims, causing us to miss opportunities.

CURIOSITY CULTIVATOR

Keep a “discovery” journal

In a recent study, participants were asked to jot down their experiences, and on days when they felt more curious, as evidenced by journal entries such as, “I tried something new...” they were more persistent and goal-oriented, says Rouleau. To pump up *your* perseverance, write down when curiosity moves you. This helps you get past stressful setbacks by boosting your willingness to try new avenues.

WILLPOWER WILTING?

You want to eat healthier, but it’s just not that simple—after a stressful day, you feel depleted, and the siren call of the ice-cream carton is too strong to resist. When we’re stressed, the higher-level brain processes known to boost willpower, such as curiosity and creativity, often take a backseat to the need to soothe ourselves, often with comfort food, which only triggers more guilt as the vicious cycle continues.

CURIOSITY CULTIVATOR

Ask yourself *this* question

“Getting curious about *why* certain habits work for you is shown to improve your health,” says Rouleau. “Ask yourself what part am I *good* at?” It may be that you have breakfast every day. That answer sparks new questions, like, what *about* breakfast works? It could be that it’s a routine, which can help you adopt new rituals, like planning healthy “stress” snacks. Asking simple, positive questions instantly raises CQ!

FEARFUL OR ANXIOUS?

You’re nervously boarding a plane for vacation, but the only thing taking “flight” is your *fear* as a squadron of what-if’s whiz through your head. If only you were as excited as the child in the next aisle happily asking her mom a million questions about your destination. “Fear curbs curiosity,” says Hamilton. “It closes us off to new experiences, and prevents us from taking the kinds of risks that expand our world.”

CURIOSITY CULTIVATOR

Channel your inner kindergartner

Kindergartners have two to five “episodes of curiosity” every two hours. But as adults, we’re lucky if we experience that many moments of wonder per *day*. To reignite your “kinder-curiosity,” take note of the world around you. “For example, in Denver, looking at the hills, I wonder when the first snow will appear,” says Rouleau. Being curious about such mini marvels ups everyday joy, fading your fear about the future.

CURIOSITY CULTIVATOR

FEELING LONELY?

Your best friend is moving across the country, and while you know you’ll stay connected through your weekly Skype dates, you can’t help but suddenly feel all alone. At the same time, your sadness is sapping your desire to make new pals. Says Rouleau, “While negative emotions inhibit our desire to connect, simply sparking our curiosity about other people is shown to help us build stronger relationships.”

Curate “connection” queries

People who are more inquisitive often have richer personal lives because they tend to ask meaningful questions about others’ dreams and values, which leads to more intimate connections, reveals Rouleau. Indeed, participants in one study who were instructed to go beyond small talk and ask each other “curiosity-driven” questions—such as, “If you had a crystal ball, what would you ask it?”—instantly felt closer to the former strangers. Need examples of deeper questions? Simply search “connection questions” online and pick out a few go-to’s that spark your curiosity!