

Cracking the Curiosity Code

*The Key to Unlocking Human
Potential*

Diane Hamilton, PhD

Chapter 16

Measuring Curiosity

If you can't measure it, it doesn't exist.

Anonymous

If you subscribe to the axiom that for something to exist it must be measurable (which I do), we have our work cut out for us. Multiple studies have been conducted about curiosity, and numerous tools help us measure its various aspects.

According to behavioral scientists, we have intellectual curiosity, trait curiosity, state curiosity, epistemic curiosity, and perceptual curiosity. Some of us even have the curiosity of chimpanzees under stress. Assessment instruments exist to measure each of these, ranging from simple questionnaires to double-blind assessments. For example, how would you respond to the following?

I get bored easily. Y/N?

I don't care how it works as long as it works. Y/N?

I love the excitement of the unknown. Y/N?

I like repetition. Y/N?

I prefer word searches to riddles. Y/N?

I'll try anything once to see what it's like. Y/N?

I enjoy trying new approaches. Y/N?

If you want to measure your curiosity in a more elaborate fashion, try the Kashdan Scale, the Melbourne Curiosity Inventory, or the California Critical Thinking Disposition Inventory (CCTDI). Measurements are available for virtually every type of curiosity we may have.

However, that is not the purpose of the Curiosity Code Index.

My goal was not to create another assessment instrument to measure one's level of curiosity, but to assess what inhibits our curiosity. Why does the natural, childlike curiosity we are born with wane as we age? We know that fear, assumptions, technology, and the environment (FATE) are major factors that

influence our curiosity, but which ones affect it a lot and which ones only a little bit, if at all? And by how much?

To fully unleash the leadership and innovation that reside within each of us and within our workforce, we need to know more about these inhibitors. Thus, the two basic hypotheses of this book and the Curiosity Code Index are that:

- 1) Curiosity is integral to all we do in life, especially if we do it well. From innovation to creativity, motivation and leadership to leading a meaningful life, curiosity is a critical difference maker that distinguishes between truly living life and merely existing.
- 2) Somewhere along that path of life, our curiosity can wane, and we may even go so far as to fall into a rut. Some say this is due to the aging process itself. (It isn't.) Some say our ability to learn begins to wane naturally as we age. (It doesn't.) So, what is it that inhibits our curiosity, and how do we get it back?

After years of research and literally thousands of interviews, I have found so many examples that defy the stereotypical assumption that age is the reason we lose our curiosity. It seems that people who are highly successful demonstrate higher levels of curiosity than those who are less successful, no matter what their endeavor or age.

The evidence is clear that people such as Elon Musk, Steve Forbes, Deepak Chopra, and Tony Robbins have taken their curiosity to new heights. Others appear to be more sporadic, less enthused, less curious. So, if it's not age, and if it's not physical or mental deterioration, then what is it?

That's what I endeavored to find out.

The answer, it appeared, was not a function of natural deterioration, but of choice.

I learned that our curiosity remains with us throughout our lives. But like a pair of shoes, we choose if and when to employ it. Better yet, we allow choices to be made for us. I learned that the inhibitors to our curiosity are not as much physical or mental as they are societal.

All of this brought me to the central question: what are those societal forces that lead us to the choice to be curious or incurious? That pursuit ultimately revealed the big four categories of FATE.

After my research, my interviews, and my discussions with CEOs, entrepreneurs, and business leaders, I had confirmed my conclusions, but they had yet to be proven. They had to be tested. And more important, I had to create a way to measure them.

Earlier, I had become certified to give multiple assessments such as the EQ-i or the MBTI. However, I had never considered creating a valid assessment instrument on my own. And I'm not talking about the kind that determines the best barbeque sauce or your favorite Tom Hanks movie. I'm talking about an assessment that must be scientifically validated and pass muster with theorists, academics, and behavioral scientists.

I couldn't simply assert that some combination of our fears and assumptions, technology, and our environment are the major factors influencing our curiosity. Which is most prevalent? Is it fear? Is it our environment? Is it some combination of the four? Is it all the above? I had to test and validate my assumptions. After all, weren't assumptions part of the problem? I needed to become more curious.

In the next chapter I present to you a preview of the companion item to this book, the Curiosity Code Index.

