

Being Curious About Curiosity

"Once we believe in ourselves, we can risk curiosity, wonder, spontaneous delight, or any experience that reveals the human spirit." - e.e cummings

What is curiosity for you? How does curiosity show up in your life at work, at home, at play and in relationship?

Curiosity is timeless; it always was and always will be. It transcends race, religion, politics, finance, culture, bias and prejudice.

Curiosity allows us to look beyond our eyes, "out there," and to arrive at a place of originality, newness – a basic reality from an untainted perspective.

What curiosity does is allow us to see new truths, truths that support the evolution of our selves, our communities and our institutions.

One way to know if curiosity is part of the fabric of your life is to look at how you live your life:

At work – What is your vision-mission statement like? Do you have a strategic plan? What is funded and what isn't? Is there an active and engaged R&D effort? What about training and development? What is the culture around interaction and interpersonal communication like? How and where does curiosity grow and thrive? Are folks openly encouraged to "think," discover, and try out new ideas?

At home – What is your family's mission statement? Are there shared values? How are the "fresh" and the "new" looked upon? Is spontaneity squashed by overbearing control, routines and structure? Who is being creative? How are new ideas and fresh approaches to the way your family lives generated and/or looked upon?

You – Do you have a purpose statement? What are your life's visions? How much of your life is habitual, in what you do, in what you say, in what you think? Are you engaged in consistent discovery and exploration? Are you a risk-taker? Are you comfortable doing what you hate to do, what you are afraid of doing, or doing something that's "not like me?"

Whether at work, at home, in relationship or in the company of your own self, do you generally come from a place of having it "all figured out?" How's that working – especially in these turbulent and challenging times? Is your life (personal, corporate) so mechanical that there is no room for curiosity or inquisitiveness?

When was the last time you re-invented your business, your relationship, your self? How do you feel about the notion of re-inventing? Exhilarated? Fearful?

As a young child, each of us was curious, the consummate explorer. We were open to the new, the magical, the aliveness and the wonder of life. We had no misperceptions, misunderstandings, misconceptions, expectations, or paradigms with which to view our world. Just curiosity, and wonderment.

But, then, it stops. We are taught how to think, do and be in ways that are "appropriate" for good little boys and girls. The fortunate ones subvert the brainwashing, and find ways to allow their curiosity and wonderment to thrive.

Too, as we grows older, many fall into habitual ways of living life. They tire and fall into the routine. Others resist the rut and choose to take risks, to look beyond the immediate and step off the well-worn

path of the "tried and true," the familiar, the comfortable, the "safe."

Curiosity is a personal conversation one has with one's self.

Many today are having this conversation not only at mid-life, but at quarter-life - lack of engagement, dissatisfaction, searching for a deeper meaning of life and re-evaluating their place in the grand scheme of things is fostering their curiosity.

Organizations and relationships – each of these entities needs to engage in the exploration of change in order to thrive and prosper. Curiosity supports the organization to look with fresh eyes at opportunity, competitiveness, collaboration, efficiency, and sustainability. Curiosity supports relationships to look with fresh eyes at their aliveness, spontaneity, maturation, connection, joy, happiness and bliss.

Unfortunately, there are individuals in organizations and relationships who want to "kill the messenger" - who see the "curious" as those wanting to "fix what isn't broken," wanting to upset "stability," who see the curious as someone who just can't leave things the way they are.

On the other hand organizations and relationships that evolve, grow, survive and thrive are those who accept and value the curious as wonderful and unique souls who benefit the organization and relationship through their probing, inquiring, exploring and wonder.

The beauty of the curious is often they are not "experts" or consultants. They are just individuals with an inquiring mind – who inspire wonder, imagination, investigation and openness to the new.

What often gets in the way of curiosity is hubris – an obsessive pride that reflects an "I know it all" approach to life and living – in corporate life and personal life. Hubris clouds the imagination, dims the light, closes down the imagination, stifles innovation and occludes realization.

Ours is a culture rife with boredom – lots of activity (rote doing) but little action (newness of doing), little curiosity.

Many of our businesses and most of our relationships lack curiosity - the "secret sauce" of moving forward with a "different-ness" that serves to promote a healthy sense of thriving, renewal, regeneration and maturation.

Curiosity demands an innocence; few are willing to take on being innocent – fearful of seeing life with a "beginner's mind," or of allowing a "not knowing." They need to have all the answers...now.

The upside to the downside in both our current economic world and in our world of unhealthy and unhappy relationships is that the stress we are experiencing can serve as an impetus to be curious about how to "make this work." For many, their stress is a motivator to seek positive change and transformation.

Many businesses and relationships are in a state of flux – of being curious and looking for new ways to survive. Successful businesses and healthy relationships are adapting, and inventing new strategies to thrive and survive. These will be rewarded. These will be smarter, better, healthier and happier organizations and relationships.

Businesses and relationships are facing serious challenges. We need to be curious about, to wonder about where we are headed both in the boardroom and in the bedroom. Curiosity can lead us to "right knowing," "right understanding" and "right action" – but only if we enter into the journey of curiosity with an open mind - free from any preconceived notions or expectations.

"It is a miracle that curiosity survives formal education." - Albert Einstein

So, some questions for self-reflection are:

- Would you describe yourself as a curious soul? Would your family, your friends, your colleagues at work?
- Has your curiosity lead you to new ideas, insights, discoveries? How so?
- Do you resist being curious? If so, why do you think this is?
- Does your organization support "curiosity?"
- Do you allow curiosity to weave through your personal relationships?
- Are you one who needs to "have all the answers?" Are you a risk-taker? Do you prefer the routine?
- Are you ever bored at work, at home? If so, why?
- What was your experience around curiosity as a child? Were your parents or primary caregivers curious? Did anyone ever frown on your imagination, your stories, your aliveness, your wonderment? Did your parents or primary caregivers encourage your curiosity and imagination?
- Can you envision a world where curiosity plays a major role in defining how you live your life?

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