



Cultivating Curiosity

Elizabeth Svoboda, Psychology Today, published
Sept 1, 2006

How to explore the world: Developing a sense of wonder can be its own reward.

Decades before Evan Schaeffer started practicing law, he developed an interest so all-consuming it verged on obsession: snakes. By the time he entered the fourth grade, he had so many reptile books that they took up an entire shelf, and he counted the gloves, golf putter and pillowcase he used for snake-hunting among his most prized possessions.

The snake fascination gradually faded, but Schaeffer's determination to learn as much as he could about everything that interested him remained. "I never have to try to have hobbies—they just seem to find me," he says. Outside of work, he plays the guitar, writes songs, is an amateur astronomer and photographer, and maintains a blog called Evan Schaeffer's Legal Underground. "I like that my mind gets to focus on things I've chosen on my own," he says. "It gives me a sense of freedom I wouldn't have otherwise."

Schaeffer is what psychologists call a "trait curious" person: someone with a tendency to delve deeply into subjects that grab his attention, learning more about himself and the world in the process. Curious people are used to being joshed for their obsessions—monikers like "band geek" and "bookworm" are a way of saying, "Just relax, already!"

The Village eView

July 20, 2016

Colette Hoff, editor

***On-Line News of the Goodenough
Community System:***

Calendar of Events:

H R L 2016 – August 7 to 13

September:

Pathwork – Sunday, September 13

Council – Monday, September 12

On-Line News of the Goodenough Community System:

The American Association for the Furtherance of Community

Convocation: A Church and Ministry

Mandala Resource, Inc.

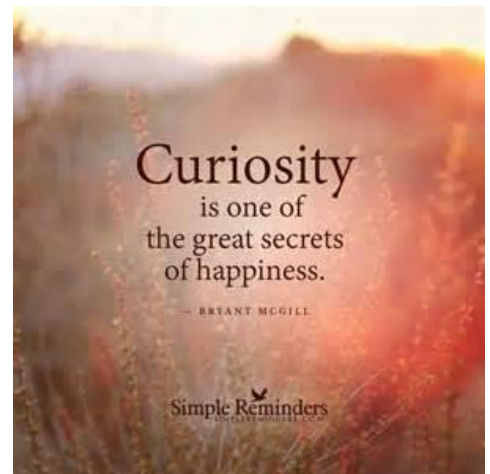
Sahale Learning Center

The EcoVillage at Sahale

According to a new study by Todd Kashdan of George Mason University, however, the unusually curious often have the last laugh.

Kashdan asked students how much they agreed with statements such as, "When I am actively interested in something, it takes a great deal to interrupt me." People who exhibit high levels of curiosity, he found, experience higher levels of satisfaction with life than their more disengaged peers. While the less curious derive more pleasure from hedonistic behaviors such as sex and drinking, curious people report finding a greater sense of meaning in life, which is a better predictor of sustainable, lasting happiness.

What accounts for the link between curiosity and well-being? Kashdan speculates that while dabbling in new activities or subject areas may be uncomfortable at first, curious people are likely to be rewarded for their efforts over the long run. These rewards can be social, like enjoying weekly lunches with friends you met in a beginning windsurfing class. Most of the time, though, the pleasure is intrinsic to the activity itself, as when you master the unicycle or a Mozart piano sonata. Because the sheer high of such an accomplishment is its own reward, the curious tend to be highly self-motivated.



"There's this paradoxical route to well-being," Kashdan says. **"Maybe the real way to make yourself happy is by doing something that challenges you, makes you stretch."** Self-reported curiosity, he adds, tends to build over time, which suggests that the knowledge and experience curious people gain give them satisfaction, motivating them to learn even more.

Curiosity can be a double-edged sword, though. The same adventurous impulses that drive curious people to books and hobbies may also lead them to partake in dangerous activities such as skydiving or experimenting with psychotropic drugs. Still, according to Paul Silvia, a social psychologist at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, the enrichment that curious people experience generally outweighs the negative effects of the risks they take. "I doubt curiosity kills too many cats," he says.

From this perspective, the Evan Schaeffers of the world have got it made. But what about those of us who think of ourselves as standoffish by nature—who shrink back at the thought of taking up scuba-diving or even a new route to work? A strong sense of curiosity is a stable trait that you either have or don't, but even if you don't think of yourself as naturally curious, Kashdan says, it's helpful to remember that curiosity can be cultivated. You can learn to work with what you have.

Just about everyone is interested in something, but in many cases social pressures stifle these curious instincts, making us forget we ever had them. "Lots of people played an

instrument when they were younger, and they say, 'I don't do it anymore because I work now,'" Kashdan says. "But really there's no definition of what an adult's supposed to be, and for some people, that's earthshaking to hear." (Continued on page 12)

cu·ri·os·i·ty

[ˌkyʊərəˈæsədə] **NOUN**

A strong desire to know or learn something:

synonyms: [interest](#) · spirit of inquiry · [inquisitiveness](#)

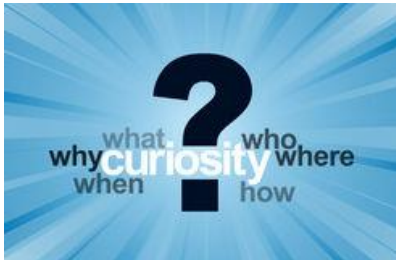
A strange or unusual object or fact:

ORIGIN

late Middle English: from Old French *curiose*, from Latin *curiositas*, from *curiosus* (see *curious*).

Prepare for Lab with Curiosity

Colette Hoff



Our theme this week is a helpful concept in preparation for the Human Relations Laboratory. It turns out that curiosity is good for us! Lab is a place to let our curious natures loose. Asking good questions of each other, getting past shyness to extend a conversation, showing curiosity without assumptions are important to the process of the Lab as well as a gift to each person. The Design Team (Kirsten, Bruce, Hollis, Colette and John) are challenging Lab participants to

come to Lab with curiosity.

In this issue John shares his understanding about curiosity through an interview with Kirsten. Two articles are presented about the role of curiosity, how it is developed, and whether it comes from within or outside of us. Recovering from the fear of failure is essential to allowing our curiosity out and in relationship.

If you have wondered about what a Lab is anyway, consider being curious and find out. To tease your curiosity, included in this issue is an article written by Josh DeMers about an experience he had at the 2011 HRL. Consider asking him questions about the experience. Mike De Anguera writes about learning to be curious.



Curiosity

John L. Hoff with Kirsten Rohde

I've always been a curious person. I needed to know how things worked the way they did, and I had a lot of questions until I understood. I think curiosity has to do with wanting to understand. There are other parts of curiosity that are fun, that have to do with just experiencing something like a swing. You can't understand a swing without being on a swing swinging.



We become curious about what's going to happen in us when we do something. For instance I love when I am taken over by laughter and out of control. Laughter is an inward experience and we become curious about an experience of happiness or joy that motivates laughter. Our bodies get involved. Then I notice the real transformative power of laughter in my mind, body and soul.

So you become curious about the experience and then want to explore further.

My exploration of the swing happened when I was in the Yukon. There weren't swings there in schoolyards. So I learned with a triple knot in a rope and swinging out and letting go to fall into the water. My two cousins and my brother were all close in age and we'd spend hours of a day swinging out and letting go. I remember that first sense of curiosity the first time I grabbed the rope and swung out. I remember having a red mark up my back from swinging out over the lake and landing on my back in the water with a slap. My mother was a brave woman to let her kids wander out in the Yukon. We all lived through that but it had some danger too. We would ask ourselves what it would be like if we did something new. We did things that were scary to us and they were brand new experiences for us. We used to climb out on a limb over a pool in the river, when we got all the way out we'd drop in the river. The river carried us out underwater a ways out into the river and we'd have to swim back. Scary and exciting. We'd scared ourselves and enjoyed it at the same time.

Would you say you've cultivated a curious mind?

It continues to entice me to be curious about things. For example, a child sees a tree and thinks the tree requires a child to climb it. So the child does something he has never done before that is about of the curiosity about climbing.

How does curiosity help people who are learning to grow? Curiosity leads us to discover more about ourselves?

I think we are naturally curious, for example, observing what it is like for someone else to do something or be some way that is new to experience. Then we can ask the person questions out of our curiosity about a new experience.

I remember when I was curious about that feeling that comes in the pit of your stomach when you're on a roller coaster at a park and the coaster drops suddenly. I wanted to experience it. My kids liked to be thrown in the air and caught – they liked the feeling of it. Curiosity has to do with wanting to know the feeling of doing something you haven't experienced before.

What advice to have for us at Lab in helping us cultivate a culture of curiosity? We might say that it feels too personal to ask questions of curiosity.

Yes it's like we don't want to know what it's like as well as wanting to know what it's like. We learn because we're curious. My own experience is enriched as I learn what it's like for someone else. Satisfying our curiosity is a way of exploring the world and especially the world of other people and relationships.

"Curiosity killed the cat. Satisfaction brought him back." It may be that curiosity is the first thing that entices us but doing or accomplishing it is the next step. We don't start out to do something sometimes, we start out being curious about it and then we do it. Cats take a long time sniffing and exploring something first. I think that curiosity is a big part of our life. As humans, our strength and courage is more in our curiosity than even in our intelligence.



Psychological Theories of Curiosity: Within or Without Us?

Josh Clark

<http://science.howstuffworks.com/life/evolution/curiosity1.htm>

To this day, exactly where curiosity originates continues to confound science. Psychologists have gotten a much better handle on classifying aspects of curiosity, though. The big question remains; does it come from within us, or is it a response to our outside world?

One camp in psychology believes that curiosity is an internal drive that originates within us, much like hunger or thirst. This **drive theory** of curiosity sees curiosity as a naturally-occurring urge that must be satisfied in a very similar manner to how we satisfy our hunger by eating. When our curiosity becomes aroused, we look to new or old interests to satisfy the urge

Cognitive psychologists propose that we form our identities in part through the information and attitudes we gain from being curious. Under this view, curiosity is like a vehicle we use to expand ourselves. It also appears that curious people are attracted to similarly curious people. One 2004 study found that high levels of trait curiosity tended to predict how close

participants felt to one another. Shared levels of trait curiosity beat out even positive trait affect -- having a generally positive outlook on life -- as a factor. So curiosity may serve as a means by which we develop interpersonal relationships, possibly through the lack of fear of failure (in this case, social rejection) associated with curiosity.

On the other hand, a lack of curiosity has been linked to negative emotions. Studies have found that temporarily depressed participants display a lack of state curiosity [source: [Rodrigue, et al](#)].



Why choose Lab

John L. Hoff

Whenever I am asked about the magic that explains how the annual Human Relations Laboratory has been chosen by so many people over a 47-year period, I point to a commitment among friends who value integrity and good communication. Lab is a place to work out challenges encountered on the *road less traveled*. I am just one of the members of a core group that plans this event every year. We begin by recognizing the importance of being supported by friends on this journey. What people refer to as magic is actually a sweet reward for being open with each other.

~

The Human Relations Laboratory August 7 to 13, 2016



*Transformation Happens
Here*

**Seven rich days of experiential learning and social creativity
within a community setting**

Transformation: *Change in form, appearance, nature, or character*

Transformation involves a complete change. The Human Relations Laboratory has been promoting change and transformation for 47 years! This year the leadership is choosing to highlight:

- Increasing one's maturity
- The conscious intention for dealing with mental health
- Becoming an active force in your own life
- Applying creativity to all areas of life including relationships and work life.

*Maturity + Sanity +
Proactivity + Creativity =
Transformation*

A bit of exercise for the writing muscles, mostly.

Josh DeMers

The recent (late 17th century) etymological roots of attitude have to do with the positioning or posture of figures in art. I was just remembering that, of the seldom times in my life that I've experienced a profoundly straight-backed posture filled with bliss, two have been substance-free. One of these was HR Lab 2011, and as I've been thinking about the upcoming HR Lab 2015, I've been wondering what it was about that particular week that it induced what could be called a very nearly religious experience in myself; and more importantly, might it be reproducible?

The moment in question was Friday at dinnertime. After grace, with everyone lining up for dinner, I took a moment by myself behind Mamook. I was having a conversation with my Self, saying essentially, "Self, I'm going to project you onto this John character pretty soon here, " because I had agreed within my small group to have a conversation with John (which would have been our first), "and this is what I'm going to say, 'John, I get it now. I can't do this alone.'"

The response from my Self was immediate and unequivocal, "You are never alone." At this point I started sobbing uncontrollably. I was worried the dinner crowd might hear me but nonetheless, I let myself just let it out. And after some minutes the tears turned to laughter - the laughter which a good psychedelic trip can engender, where everything seems so trivial and feels so light - and I just let it go on for a good 45 minutes. Following this experience, I found (and even reported to the large group later, though admittedly not the whole story), that my posture was naturally upright and relaxed, and that I felt filled with an attitude of love and joy and peace. Most of all it felt familiar, as if that was my original nature.

So what was it about Lab that brought this experience out of me? Was it the compassion and acceptance of a group of strangers creating an environment which melted away guilt and shame in me? Because that was certainly true. Embarrassment, guilt and shame are my

enemies, and yet I felt great making a complete fool of myself in front of Swamp audiences and White Tent circles alike, that year. And in small group, I felt uninhibited in a different way - more serious and conversational, but equally unabashed in a new and unfamiliar way, thanks to the particular, compassionate attention paid to me (and to all) during our times together in Kopet Wawa.

So perhaps that's the aspect of the experience that's most reproducible - that is, creating a loving environment conducive to change, similar to the therapeutic method of Carl Rogers, on the part of the whole. And on the part of the individual, well, for myself, I came into that Lab firstly needing a change, secondly believing in the process, having seen what it could do to effect change, and finally choosing to really go for it, to give it all I could.

This year, I find myself in a similar situation, with a similar need, and a similar belief, but (I'm almost ashamed to admit) still working on that choice to give it my all. Yet I trust that the attitudes of compassion and acceptance I experienced then will be present at HR Lab 2015 (as they are at Sahale day-to-day), and I intend to help create that supportive environment for others as much as I am able. Not expecting a repeat of that experience which shook me to the core, but when I shared some of this story earlier tonight at dinner, the response I heard was something like, "Yup, that'll happen."



The deAnguera Blog: Curiosity



Curiosity involves asking questions about things that lead to more questions. Those questions can lead to yet still more questions. The quest is on. It can become an obsession and result in significant learning. The only times I've really learned anything were when I asked my own questions, not somebody else's. I never had this opportunity in school because there was always so much stuff assigned. I never asked why I should learn a specific something. I just assumed that if I did what I was expected to do that I would have it made.

In the left hand photo we are celebrating Bill Scott's birthday. Lots of chocolate cake. It amazes me just how quickly we ended up in our older years. When I was young the

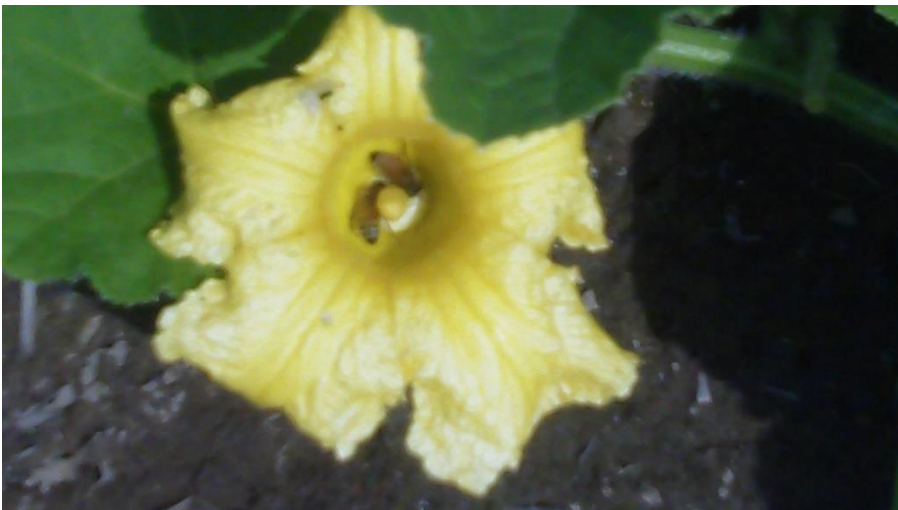
passage of time seemed to be an eternity. Now it flies by so fast. Why? I am curious as to why we start off as children and grow old and die. Why? I am no longer satisfied with the answers religion gives. I don't like the idea of old age being a punishment. To me that is not healthy psychology. I am even challenging Christianity's answer here. I am coming up with my own answer. Old age is simply part of the life cycle of every living thing on this planet.

In the right hand photo Evelyn Cilley and her Workaway friend Melanie are weeding the Hugelkultur field. Josh DeMers designed this field based on the ideas of Sepp Holtzer, the Austrian rebel farmer. He chose to do this work himself and we helped him out in it. I remember when Jim Tocher and I used to plow nice neat rows in this same location. That's what comes of being curious about different ideas on planting a field. This design certainly looks a lot more interesting and artistic.

Melanie has been so helpful to us. She hails from Utah and definitely feels like a friend of the family even though she has barely been with us a week. I remember the great time we had with May, a young woman from Spain. Workaway as a program is working very well in connecting like-minded people with each other. It allows people the chance to experiment with different communities and work for room and board. I wish I could have accessed something similar when I was Melanie's age.

Why was I not a curious person when I was young? Guess I just wanted to get started on a career as soon as possible. It seemed the sensible thing to do. Now I understand taking a break between high school and college is not a bad idea. Why even go to college? Most young people still plan a college education. Why? To me it has never been effective at opening employment doors. Now it is so much more expensive. Discover what I can do with myself? College has not been good for that either. I learned far more on my own than I ever did in a college class. I have no desire to be a professional such as a lawyer. Besides these folks still have trouble finding work. I knew at least one lawyer who still had to work a check stand because there were too many lawyers looking for work.

I am curious about what people and communities can do together. Everywhere I look our society seems to be full of dead wood. These institutions once performed a useful function such as colleges and churches but now increasingly they are like a load our society carries.



Two bees inside a squash blossom. Now how cool is that?

Community News

By Elizabeth Jarrett-Jefferson



Birthdays and Anniversaries

- **Happy 14th anniversary, Bruce & Irene Perler - July 20**
- **Happy 29th birthday, Therese Gossett - July 24**
- **Happy birthday, Josh DeMers, July 26**



"It's curiosity."

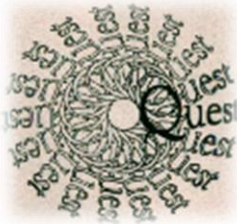


"Pop, am I experiencing a normal childhood?"

CN

Cultural Programs & Events in 2016

Watch for new dates for the cultural programs coming soon!



Quest: A Counseling and Healing Center

Our belief is that mental and emotional health is a prerequisite for spiritual well-being, collaboration, and the expression of compassion. Quest's counseling and education programs, open to all interested individuals, focus on empowering individuals, couples, and family groups to be happier and be more effective in relationships.

Call John or Colette (206-755 8404) or Colette and John at Sahale – 360 275-3957. In Seattle, John and Colette meet with clients at the community center, 3610 SW Barton Street, Seattle 98106, as well as at Sahale.

(Continued from page 3)

Surmounting your fear of failure will also help you realize your full curiosity-potential. Silvia recommends enlisting a friend to join you in pursuing a new interest that seems intimidating, like kickboxing or watercolors. "Make a pact that you're going to do this together and not judge each other," he says.

Still, occasional slipups are an inevitable part of learning and discovery. "In curious people, there's internal growth that takes place regardless of the outcome," Kashdan says. "Let's say you've never tried barracuda before, but you decide to order it at a restaurant. If you like it, that's great, but even if you don't, you have a story you can use to connect with people: 'Have you ever tried barracuda? It's disgusting!' Either way, you've expanded yourself a bit."

In Schaeffer's case, following his inquisitive mind led to new opportunities he'd never even considered. "A publisher got into contact with me through my blog and asked if I'd like to write a book about trial law," he says. "I'd always had a side career in writing, but I never expected it to turn into something like this." The lives of curious people may not always go according to plan, but their willingness to take a chance on improvisation pays big in dividends.

How to Flex Your Curiosity Muscle

- Reframe "boring" situations. If you've got an inquiring mind, it's possible to turn even mundane events, like waiting in line at the DMV, into something meaningful. Look for details others might miss, and seek to learn more about them. For instance, try turning to another customer in line and saying, "I noticed the Purple Heart pinned to your jacket. What war did you serve in?"
- Don't let fear stop you from trying something new.

"If you're curious about something, it acts as a positive counterweight to anxiety and fear," Silvia says. Exercising your curiosity won't wipe out doubt, but it may help you focus on the likely positive consequences of a new venture (learning to execute a perfect swan dive) rather than the negative ones (doing a belly flop and surfacing to the sound of laughter).

- Let your true passions shine. A key component of curiosity is what Boston College psychologist Ellen Winner calls a "rage to master"—whether that involves accumulating rejection slips from The New Yorker or spending hours in the basement learning banjo fingerings. An intense focus on specific interests or goals invites the state of mental immersion called "flow," which in turn elicits feelings of accomplishment and well-being.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200609/cultivating-curiosity>

