

Explore and learn

The beauty of curiosity

Coaches ask provocative questions. When a coach is fully present in a conversation, the right provocative questions naturally emerge from the coach's curiosity.

Of course we have to be free enough of mental chatter so we are aware of our own curiosity, and we must honor it – not hush it up. Then we can navigate via curiosity – a valuable approach to any authentic conversation.

"I'm curious about your desire to open a restaurant," is much more likely to get an honest and productive response than, "Why do you want to open a restaurant?"

I've always been pretty curious about curiosity itself. Probably we all come into this world with a healthy amount of curiosity. You see some kids who are driven by it, taking things apart to see what makes them work, turning over rocks to see the life underneath, driving us nuts asking, "why?" And of course some kids and adults get into big trouble by letting curiosity be the only driver behind decisions.

In the main though, curiosity deserves a whole lot of credit. Without the gift of curiosity we'd have scant results from scientists. Motivation to explore our world would be very different. Our minds would be much weaker since curiosity makes us mentally active, observant and strong. Without curiosity our minds don't seek out new ideas and possibilities. Without curiosity life can be pretty boring. With it we can anticipate learning something new every day and never be bored.

I do think as we stumble through life there is a tendency for our curiosity to get

tamped down. Not sure why. It may be the negative reaction some "Curious George" kids get from parents and teachers. It may be that society teaches us to de-value curiosity and pay more attention to fitting in or accumulating stuff.

It may be that we just don't know how to keep our curiosity alive. Curiosity thrives in an open mind, one eager to learn, unlearn and relearn. Curious minds ask questions relentlessly, and dig deep to find the interesting parts of things. Like baseball. I confess that for years I labeled baseball as boring. Jim Donovan would have none of that and teased my curiosity with a myriad of intricacies about the game. A long-lasting gift he gave me and I smile as I hunt for a Brewer's game on the radio when I have a drive on a summer day.

Curiosity likes new environments and new subjects. Nurturing our curiosity will improve the quality of life and keep us young.

Granted, sometimes we have to make choices about satisfying our curiosity, or end up like the college student changing his major every semester.

If you're running a business, you may be a very curious entrepreneur, wanting to investigate everything you can imagine that has an impact on your organization. You may be curious about who's interviewing for every job, how each manager is doing, what you should say at the annual meeting, how your competitors stack up, what technology is in the pipeline, why sales go up in the month of March each year, and on and on. Beyond your business you may be curious about why you're drawn to certain

music, why one of your sons is so crazy about reading history and the other you can't drag off the practice field long enough to focus on much of anything but sports. You may be curious as all get-out about astronomy, or wine or the debate over global warming.

In order to serve your business – and to be an interested and interesting person, you will need to do a lot of thinking about yourself – your values, your beliefs, your various roles, your passion, your human limitations (you do need sleep) and choose which curiosities deserve your attention and which to perhaps file away for another time.

In your business, figure out where to focus, what you can delve into and get better at that will have the best chance of getting the results you want.

Whatever you do though, keep your curiosity alive and well. Let it lead you to new strategies, new foods, new travel destinations. Let it lead you to cross training and to mixing up the composition of teams in your organization. Let it allow you to form your own provocative and respectful questions with your mind open to whatever answers come. Enjoy it.

"I have no special talents. I am only passionately curious." Guess who said that? Albert Einstein.



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