

How Curious? Will Help You

Without question, happiness is important. Who doesn't want to be happy and wish the same for their loved ones? But this book is not limited to happiness. This is a book about living a life that matters with a broader view about what the "good life" entails. Much of what we desire often has nothing to do with happiness but is just as important. This includes meaning and purpose in life, wisdom, satisfying relationships, the ability to tolerate distress, spirituality, creativity, compassion, feeling a sense of competence and mastery, and so on. Sometimes trying to be happy actually gets in the way of making inroads toward these other elements. Effectively handling the pain and stress that life brings is an essential part of creating a rich, meaningful existence.

When you adopt this broad view of what matters, an important question remains that this entire book hinges on. What is essential to creating a fulfilling life? The answer is...

- Being curious.
- Being open to new experiences.
- Being able to effectively manage ambiguity and uncertainty.
- Being able to adapt to the demands required of different situations (what I call "psychological flexibility").
- Discovering our strengths, deepest values, and what it is we are passionate about.
- Strengthening connections to these values and passionate pursuits so that we can pursue a life aligned with them.

This book provides a closer look at curiosity; a neglected and underappreciated strength in our arsenal. People regularly ignore curiosity because it appears, on the surface, to be a very obvious, simple, impotent emotion—something unusual appears or someone captivates us by a story, we feel curious, and direct our attention to explore further. But while this emotion seemed simplistic even to me, as I began my research, I soon discovered that curiosity is a deeper, more complex phenomenon that plays a critical role in what makes people's lives most worth living. Curiosity is the spark plug that ignites other factors that contribute to happiness and meaning in life. You can't work with strengths until you spot them and investigate them. You can't be grateful without being curious about what benefits you received in your life.

Besides a better understanding of curiosity, readers will be introduced to strategies for becoming a more curious explorer. By reclaiming curiosity and learning how to wield it, readers will be able to demonstrably alter the quality of their lives. A good portion of this book focuses on how to find, create, and sustain fulfilling moments and a fulfilling life.

If there was ever a time point to be curious and flexible, it's now. In today's climate of heightened financial instability, many of us are finding ourselves in stressful places that we never expected. Many of us are being pushed to search for new paths and new sources of meaning. Based on the latest scientific knowledge, this book provides the tools to be fulfilled even when uncertain times are making it increasingly difficult.

This book challenges some conventional assumptions about how to achieve lasting fulfillment. Besides presenting ideas, I am going to present solutions informed by research conducted by myself and other scientists.

I am going to show you how to transform boring, mundane, and routine moments to be more energizing and interesting.

I am going to show how these moments can be deepened so that you can create lasting interests and passions.

I am going to offer a new perspective about relationships and social interactions as the ultimate source of personal growth. I will show you why it is essential to attend to what we don't know about people, and how they differ from us, instead of relying on what we already know and how they are similar to us.

I am going to show you how being curious is an effective strategy for managing anxiety and stress. Some fascinating research shows how working with, instead of against, anxiety is a springboard for finding meaning and purpose in the aftermath of loss and trauma. You are going to be exposed to techniques for making it more likely that you "grow" from difficult life events.

I am going to show you how to invigorate your work, your parenting, or any activity to be more energizing and rewarding. This includes how people find a purpose or "calling" in life. If you are in a leadership position, I am going to show you how to supercharge your organization so that the people in it are more engaged, productive, innovative, and better able to manage conflict and change.

We are all familiar with the experience of being curious. Although we are hardwired to be curious, and some of us experience it more frequently and intensely, it has become clear that any of us can become more curious—at any age.

When we explore the new, we strengthen connections between nerve cells in our brain. We also create neuronal connections between different parts of the brain that didn't previously exist. This is called "neural plasticity." The same brain that remembers an event is not the same brain that experienced it. We can become more open to new experiences, more comfortable dealing with tension and anxiety, and more intelligent, wiser, and resilient. By taking part in activities that energize our curiosity, we can reverse some of the natural degeneration that occurs with age. In fact, there are promising signs that searching for novelty and exploring our world reduces the risk for Parkinson's and Alzheimer's disease.

With the right mind-set, there is novelty to be found everywhere. We can be curious anytime. Brief techniques can have large, profound effects on your life. I will show you the skills for how to wield this profound strength and the science behind them.

These and other topics are fueled by groundbreaking research on the importance of being alive in the present moment with an attitude of openness and curiosity. This book will do more than intrigue you with fascinating stories and research. It provides the tools to unleash the curious explorer within you.

I believe this book has the potential to transform people's lives. It can change how people, relationships, and organizations operate. If you are a leader (whether it is a business, classroom, or household), you can directly benefit from using this as a reference for how to motivate people and create a productive, enjoyable, creative, and meaningful environment.