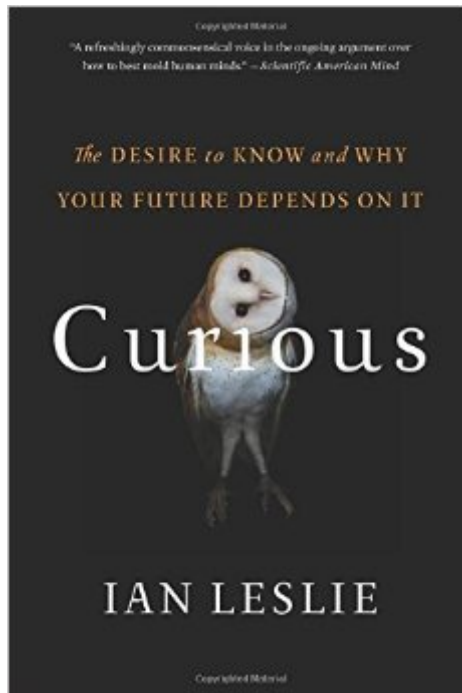


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Curious: The Desire To Know And Why Your Future Depends On It



Synopsis

“I have no special talents,” said Albert Einstein. “I am only passionately curious.” Everyone is born curious. But only some retain the habits of exploring, learning, and discovering as they grow older. Those who do so tend to be smarter, more creative, and more successful. So why are many of us allowing our curiosity to wane? In *Curious*, Ian Leslie makes a passionate case for the cultivation of our “desire to know.” Just when the rewards of curiosity have never been higher, it is misunderstood, undervalued, and increasingly monopolized by a cognitive elite. A “curiosity divide” is opening up. This divide is being exacerbated by the way we use the Internet. Thanks to smartphones and tools such as Google and Wikipedia, we can answer almost any question instantly. But does this easy access to information guarantee the growth of curiosity? No—quite the opposite. Leslie argues that true curiosity—the sustained quest for understanding that begets insight and innovation—is in fact at risk in a wired world. Drawing on fascinating research from psychology, economics, education, and business, *Curious* looks at what feeds curiosity and what starves it, and finds surprising answers. Curiosity isn’t, as we’re encouraged to think, a gift that keeps on giving. It is a mental muscle that atrophies without regular exercise and a habit that parents, schools, and workplaces need to nurture. Filled with inspiring stories, case studies, and practical advice, *Curious* will change the way you think about your own mental habits, and those of your family, friends, and colleagues.

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Customer Reviews

There is an interesting relationship between questioning and curiosity; the latter tends to inspire the former. So when I learned of *Curious*, I was naturally intrigued, interested, wanted to learn more about it – yes, I was curious. If you want to be a better questioner – or if you want to inspire more questioning in your organization, your students, or your own children – it's important to understand the uniquely-human condition that causes us to wonder and inquire. And Ian Leslie does a great job of explaining that condition – what it is, why it's so important, what nourishes it (or stifles it). I'll just share a few quick highlights here:- Early in the book, Leslie makes a good point about how curiosity (like questioning) has sometimes gotten a bad rap through the years. "Our oldest stories about curiosity are warnings; Adam & Eve, Icarus and the sun, Pandora's box," Leslie writes. "There's a reason for this: Curiosity is unruly | Pursuing it is liable to bring you into conflict with authority at some point, as everyone from Galileo to Charles Darwin to Steve Jobs could have attested." He adds: "A society that values order above all else will seek to suppress curiosity. But a society that believes in progress, innovation, and creativity will cultivate it, recognizing that the inquiring minds of its people constitute its most valuable asset." The author explains that there is an important difference between unfocused curiosity – think of a young child showing a passing interest in anything and everything that's unfamiliar – and the kind of deeper curiosity that makes us want to dig into something of specific interest.

Strengthening observational skills is a worthy objective. However, if a person has little (if any) curiosity driven by a desire to learn, to understand, what's the point? Also, someone with little (if any) curiosity probably has no interest in that fact. It is no coincidence that companies that are annually ranked among those that are most innovative are also the most profitable and have the greatest cap value in their industry. What they also have in common is a culture within which anomalies are highly valued. The Asimov observation I selected at to serve as the subject of this review is dead-on. Now more than at any prior time that I can remember, all organizations (whatever their size and nature may be) need both problem-finders and problem-solvers at all levels and in all areas of operation in the given enterprise. As Ian Leslie explains, "A society that values order above all else will seek to suppress curiosity. But a society that believes in progress, innovation, and creativity will cultivate it, recognizing that the inquiring minds of its people constitute its most valuable asset." He goes on to point out, "During the Renaissance and Reformation, European societies started to see that their future lay with the curious and encouraged probing questions rather than stamping on them. The result was the biggest explosion of new ideas and scientific advances in history." Moreover, "The great unlocking of curiosity translated into a cascade of

prosperity for the nations that precipitated it. Today, we cannot know for sure if we are in the middle of this golden period or at the end of it. But we are, at the very least, in a lull.

An interesting, though formulaic book with a glaring lack of appropriate citations. After reading several in this genre (Quiet, Nonsense, etc) I now recognize the formula: 1. Have a general point in mind 2. Assemble a wide range of anecdotes from history, literature, and science 3. Summarize some scientific studies which support the basic idea (and ignore the ones that don't fit) 4. Blend in the author's point (presuming he or she actually has one) 5. Give it a catchy one word title followed by a colon and a sub title. Voila! A book! That is not to say the formula isn't valuable. In the 1980s, Journey followed and perfected pop music formulas to multiple platinum success. It is hard to argue with sales results. Curious is a good general book designed to encourage curiosity and stimulate creative thinking throughout an entire lifespan. To this end, it works. Leslie introduces some key concepts and tips to stimulate curiosity. But ultimately I could not get past the obvious oxymoron- This book -which intends to promote creativity- is not very creative. While it succeeds as a general book to promote curiosity and creativity, Curious is of limited usefulness due to poor citation. As I read the book, I had this nagging sense that Leslie was taking great pains not to give appropriate credit for ideas. His end notes are meager and mostly worthless. Leslie does specify names to go with concepts, but it is very much in passing, almost as if it is done begrudgingly. I was left with the sense that Leslie wants readers to think that he came up with the idea and praise him for being erudite, as opposed to Leslie being a diligent researcher and reporter.

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