

Book review

Curious

The desire to know and why your future depends on it

Category: Book Reviews / Non-fiction

Author: Ian Leslie

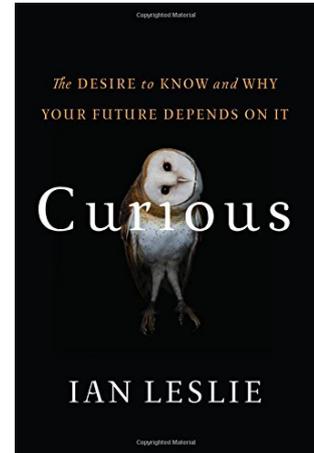
Year: 2014

Publisher: Basic Books, US

ISBN: 9780465079964

Audience: Supporting Myself

Summary: A passionate case for the cultivation of our "desire to know"



This book sets curiosity in the history of the world. For example, Leonardo da Vinci's curiosity was far ranging and well documented. Ian Leslie describes how curiosity can develop and flower in each of our lives, given the right conditions. He lists ways that we can keep it alive or revive it in our minds today.

How does the internet affect our curiosity? Possibly for better, possibly for worse. It is a powerful learning tool which is too often used for recreation such as playing games and looking at cute cat videos!

An interesting distinction is made between puzzles, which have a "pat" answer, and mysteries about which we will wonder, be curious about, until our dying day.

The power of the question

A large section is devoted to the power of the question. How do we encourage children to ask the right sort of question? Why is this so important? How does having a database of knowledge enable us to make more penetrating enquiries?

The author illustrates the book with anecdotes about ordinary people exercising their curiosity (or not, as the case may be) and tells stories about how never flagging curiosity was an essential ingredient in the success of people like Walt Disney and Steve Jobs.

If this book has a weakness, it is that the author has not specified exactly the research which he describes. It would have been good to be able to see where and when the research was carried out so that a curious reader would be able to easily access it.

Review by Fay Weatherly, a member of U3A

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