

Curiosity is Essential

So You Want to Be a Journalist · By Simon Townsend · 2 min read

Lack of curiosity is some

students' downfall

I love tutoring. But it has ups and downs.

And the worst down is realising that about 20% of my students will never make it into a worthwhile career in journalism.

Why?

These 20% of students lack curiosity.

You can't be journalist if you're not curious.

A successful journalist is always curious.

You must be curious enough to at least READ the publications you say you'd like to write for. Amongst the 20% are students who simply don't read . . . they get their information from radio, TV and conversation with friends.

You should be curious about big questions like:

- How does the world work?
- How does the human brain work?
- What are people's motivations for what they do, or for what they love or hate?

Curious about the little things:

- Why do dogs bark and cats meow?
- Why is A4 paper the size it is?
- Why are some people able to nap, and others can't?

If I was a student, I'd be curious about my editor. Who is Simon Townsend? What are his qualifications? Is he any good as a tutor? Yet 20% of my students are totally un-curious about me. Oh well . . .

I CANNOT offer a FactSheet called: "How to acquire curiosity".

You are either curious or you're not.

But without natural curiosity, I don't know how anyone can become a successful journalist.

Wikipedia, the wonderful online people's encyclopedia, says (reprinted with permission):

Curiosity

Definition In essence, "curiosity" is a term that describes an unknown number of behavioral and psychological mechanisms that have the effect of impelling beings to seek information and interaction with their natural environment and with other beings in their vicinity.

Causes Curiosity is an innate capability of many living beings, but it can not be subsumed under category of instinct because it lacks the quality of fixed action pattern; it is rather one of innate basic emotions because it can be expressed in many flexible ways while instinct is always expressed in a fixed way, and like any innate capability it confers a survival advantage to certain species, and can be found in their genomes.

Who is affected? Curiosity is common to human beings at all ages from infancy to old age, and is easy to observe in many other animal species. These include apes, cats, fish, reptiles, and insects; as well as many others. Many aspects of exploration are shared among all beings, as all known terrestrial beings share similar aspects: limited size and a need to seek out food sources. Strong curiosity is the main motivation of famous scientists. In fact, it is mainly curiosity that makes a human being an expert in a certain field of knowledge. Many famous historical figures were affected strongly by curiosity, to explore and conquer, for example, Columbus, Balboa, Magellan, Coronado, Sir Francis Drake, etc. to name a few.

Abstract curiosity Though humans are sometimes considered particularly very curious, they sometimes seem to miss the obvious when compared to other animals. What seems to happen is that human curiosity combined with the ability to think in an abstract way, lead to mimesis, fantasy and imagination - eventually leading to an especially human way of thinking ("human reason"), which is abstract and self aware, or conscious.

Morbid curiosity is a compulsion, fixed with excitement and fear, to know about macabre topics, such as death and horrible violence. In a milder form, however, this can be understood as a cathartic form of behavior or as something instinctive within humans. According to Aristotle, in his Poetics we even "enjoy contemplating the most precise images of things whose sight is painful to us." This aspect of our nature is often referred to as the 'Car Crash Syndrome' or 'Trainwreck Syndrome', derived from the notorious inability of passersby to ignore such accidents.

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