Year_____ Month_____Day_____Consecutive Practice Days_____Missed Days_____

# Day 14

*Gratitude:*

Curiosity is a skill.

We speak of curiosity as if it's an innate quality, and you either have it or you don't.

"She *is* a curious person." As if it's a part of her natural born identity.
"He let his curiosity get the best of him." As if curiosity is a curse that just came upon him.
"Are you curious about this?" As if curiosity is an involuntary reflex.

I do think we are born curious. But there are some curiosity killers that suck that innate skill from our souls.

As children, we're ironically told to put our curiosity to the side if we're asking too many questions when we should be studying the prescribed curriculum of the school. You can be curious about science, just not in language arts class. It's obvious that mandatory, overly structured learning is a good way to kill curiosity. Discuss with your average first-grader about almost anything and you're likely to be met with a thousand "why?" questions. Ask a seventh-grader what they're excited to learn about in school and you'll be lucky if you get a grunt. We're told that these are normal growth phases of the human child, but in my experience I've met quite a few unschooled and homeschooled kids who've managed to hold on to that sense of wonder about the world well into adulthood.

As adults, many of us have jobs that are a bit like a hamster wheel. People commute the same way at the same time each day and carry on throughout the day on a sort of auto-pilot in order to do their job consistently. Curiosity is put to the side because no one seems to have time for it. Too busy. Got shit to do. Bills to pay.

TV and social media are two more curiosity killers. With television, it's usually a passive receiving of entertainment. And if we can agree that curiosity is a skill, then it needs to be practiced. Practice indicates some effort- not passive reception. Social Media might be even worse, it's often passive but fed to you in unpredictable little chunks. The

unpredictability is stimulating and addicting. Being exposed to only small bits of comments and memes causes atrophy of yet another skill; attention. Your attention and ability to focus are intrinsically linked to your ability to foster curiosity (and vice-versa). Use it or lose it!

The good news is that if curiosity is a skill, that means it can be improved. We can cultivate curiosity the same way we can develop most skills; through practice.

I first began to think of curiosity as a skill when prompted to do so in a meditation practice. In this particular meditation, I was instructed to focus only on my breathing, one breath at a time. To help with this focus, I was led to pay attention to each breath with a sense of curiosity; is this breath longer or shorter than the last one? Is it deeper or more shallow? Was there more of a pause between the previous breath or less? If you can practice being curious about something as mundane as your breathing, you get a tremendous carry-over effect of being able to direct the skill of curiosity toward almost anything.

How do you begin to practice curiosity?

Start asking questions.

Emotions follow actions, so if you want to develop a better ‘sense’ of curiosity, act as if you’re curious by asking questions.

This is an integral skill for The Lyceum Method, as we learn to replace attachment to specific outcomes, with curiosity about future results.

Let’s play a game. Begin to develop a sense of wonder today by considering some alternatives to your vision. Instead of trying to come up with your “ultimate vision” today, see if you can come up with at least three different versions of a future you. Five would be better. What if you were an artist? A scuba diver? What if you were living in Italy? Or Texas? Or...? You get the idea. Since your vision is not going to be written in stone, have some fun dreaming up some alternatives today. Ask yourself, “what if?”, then develop the curiosity skill by asking “How would I move toward this vision or that?” “What would I be doing today if I were going to begin to build this life?” Questions are the tools that build curiosity, so ask away!

*Vision:*

*Daily:*