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Engaging Curiosity

An excerpt from Padme Nina Livingstone's
[Let's Not Call It Meditation: Practical Guidance
for people who think they can't sit still and quiet
the mind](#)



I saw a bumper sticker once, which read, "Curiosity explores magic. So ask questions!" The "magic" is what happens when we are open, and actively curious! Watching a child explore the garden soil demonstrates this perfectly. Anything found is a treasure. All of it is as it is, and the moment-to-moment detailed looking is enough! Curiosity fuels the whole exploration. There is nothing to judge as good or bad. Everything discovered is perfect, just as it is. Wonder-full!

When we bring an open curiosity to our confusion, and our painful experiences, we allow a kind of magic into our lives. Curiosity allows us to explore without knowing how things will work out. Feeling the body's experiences, noticing thought, and not doing anything to resist or hold on, we discover the cloud-like qualities of our feelings and thoughts. Fears dissipate. We notice physical sensations and/or hear thoughts passing through. There's nothing else for the mind to do. We're simply noticing what's happening in the moment.

We don't need to "feed" the part of us, which has an idea of how things should work out. There's no need to make it different. There's no need to make our feelings "more" (as with self-pity), or push them away (as with denial). We can experience our life as it really is, with honesty, even when we are in pain. Awareness is enough. And there's space, which can include open active curiosity as we live from moment-to-moment.

An active childlike curiosity brings openness, with no expectations for what the "end" of our questioning will look like. It is not about a right and wrong answer. We are surrendering to whatever comes up and greeting it with awareness, because we have not set up preconditions.

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As an example, let's say you have a teenage daughter who has been exploring her boundaries. She has ignored family rules recently, such as coming home past curfew, not doing her homework on occasion, and leaving house jobs undone. You have been getting more and more concerned about her well being...worrying about the possibility of drug use, teen pregnancy, failing in school.

When she first came home from a date late, you greeted her at the door and accepted her excuse. You talked with her in a mature grounded manner and she responded in kind. The next time she broke a rule, you noticed a little niggling feeling in your gut, and were able to stay calm and just talk with her. It has gotten harder and harder lately. The last time, there was an explosion from you and then her, and it ended badly. You both were furious. She didn't feel loved and trusted. You felt angry and couldn't trust her the way you wanted, and lost your temper, which you knew wasn't loving. So you were angry with yourself. Maybe she got angry with herself, too.



The last time, she came home very late from a date with a boy you had barely met...just long enough to notice his long hair, spacey smile, and polite demeanor with you, the parent.

While she was out, you wondered about the mess you two had created. As the adult you needed to find a new way to look at this, in case she came home late again. The opportunity to openly explore how you might respond was right there. You felt prepared for anything when she walked in the door, late. Part of you was still ready to explode.

As she walked in, you noticed her exhausted face and stooped tired body. Instead of opening with accusations (which were in the mind the moment before), you paused. She collapsed in your arms crying. She had been walking for three hours to get home from her date's broken down car. They had gotten out of the movie in a different town, and started driving home. They had stopped at a light and the car died, and wouldn't start again.

She was scared to walk home alone, but he wanted to stay with his car until the morning and she knew she had to get home. Cars passed, and she hid along the roadside, scared of something worse happening. Her cell phone wasn't working, and he'd forgotten his.

The openness which met the daughter when she arrived home, allowed a loving presence to fully embrace the situation. The daughter's upset condition was noticed and expectations dispersed. Awareness allowed you to be with whatever came ...to just see what would happen next.

Curiosity about previous painful interactions helped another interaction be more loving. We must bring an open active curiosity to our painful interactions, in order to be present in the moment.

Perhaps, someday, you and your daughter will be able to laugh at what went through your head that night before she came home. Humor is a powerful healer and helps bring balance to our physical, mental, and spiritual life.



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