



CHARACTER STRENGTHS

Curiosity

WHAT IT IS AND PRACTICAL EXERCISES TO IMPROVING YOUR USE OF IT

Alexandra J. S. Fouracres | 2020

Introduction

This short document gives some quick insights into the character strength: **curiosity**. It also provides some interventions at the end that you can try that will help you reflect on your current use of curiosity and maybe inspire some thinking on how you can use this strength (if you choose to), in new ways.

Video summary

There is a short 3 minutes video here: <https://youtu.be/SUH5yryrtSc> briefly summarizing the contents of this document.

Is curiosity a good thing?

Curiosity is one of five strengths linked by research to satisfaction with life as well as health, longevity, happiness and positive social relationships

(<https://www.viacharacter.org/character-strengths/curiosity>).

This may be because if you are curious you will go after opportunities to further yourself or new experiences.

This linked [Ted Talk](#) on the value of curiosity, looks at how exploring around us can lead to knowledge and development.

What is curiosity?

A curious person...

- Might be open to new experiences
- Desires to learn or know about anything; inquisitiveness.
- May reflect on experiences
- Looks to explore and discover and solve problems
- Could be seen as prying; meddlesome.

Essentially, if you are curious you are interested perhaps on what goes on for you inside as well as around you and you want to explore more. This exploration may include new

things, talking to new people and solving problems. In turn, this can lead to improved performance and abilities.

Use of character strengths

Curiosity is a character strength, so this has implications that are good to know about.

Character strengths are often portrayed as something you have or don't have. You can alternatively consider that they are on a spectrum where you may have more or less of a particular character strength.

Not everyone scores on a test as having a particular character strength, or considers themselves having a strength. Secondly, not everyone has a good experience using a strength even if they have it. Meaning even if you are really good at being curious, it doesn't mean you enjoy using that strength.

Research has shown using character strengths you align with, can energize you. However, on the other side, research shows using a strength you don't align with or that you don't enjoy using de-energizes you.

Example: Leadership is a character strength. A person might be good at leadership, but, not everyone will have a positive reaction using it. Some people when doing something that is "leadership" may feel tired and de-energized. Just because they are good at it, doesn't mean it is something that they like to do.

This means whilst it is ok to encourage a character strength like 'curiosity' in yourself or another, it is not something that should be expected of a person to use or pushed.

Building up character strengths

When trying to build a character strength in someone it is usually better to look at the strengths that are positive for them. How do you do that?

Look for the 3 Es (Niemiec 2018):

- ✓ Essential – core to the person
- ✓ Energizing – person is energized when using them
- ✓ Effortless: it is easy for the person to use the strength, does not feel forced.

When are you being curious?

Character strengths can be over-used and under-used – it is always about the balance – so with curiosity how does that look?

Under-use: a person underusing curiosity can come over as not interested and not open to new things or experiences.

Over-use: a person overusing curiosity can become lost in details. Being too curious can also give an impression of being nosy rather than inquisitive.

This also means that when encouraging curiosity in others or yourself, it's important to also consider balance.

How to encourage curiosity

Intervention 1

In this intervention, you deliberately reflect in order to create a practice of curiosity that may become more automatic

- Set 5 randomly placed reminders in your calendar during the course of one week.
- When the reminder pops up, take a moment to consider what is happening right now in your present moment.
- Reflect on the “why” of ‘why something is happening’.
- What is going on behind the surface of what you see?
- Reflect on what comes up for you as you dig into that.
- At the end of the week, reflect in writing how this has been for you.

Intervention 2

This is an intervention for those that already consider themselves curious. How can you use your strength in a new way?

- At work when helping others (colleagues or customers), how can you use your skills in curiosity to ask questions that show you are interested and want to create the best outcome for them.
- Find balance through not being too curious and asking more than you need to.

Intervention 3

Encouraging children to build up curiosity as a strength

If you have children or work with them curiosity is a useful strength to cultivate when it comes to learning. Use of curiosity can bring reflection and new knowledge. In children

then, this might cultivate problem solving as they make connections between different elements. In turn this strength may help them learning and at school or in any kind of development going forward.

For parents/educators, don't forget also that it is less important to have the "right" answers and more important to create an environment where questioning -- and learning -- can occur.

- Option 1. Children naturally ask a lot of questions so you can note when they are in question mode and bounce off that. Ask questions that make them think or reflect at another level or in another way. Note how they react and respond to that. Reminder again: to encourage it is more about being curious and delving into something than having a correct answer or knowledge set at the end of it. So there are no wrong answers!
- Option 2. This will work well particularly also with quieter children. First, note what the child likes to do & what energizes them. When you sense they are energized and more vocal, this might be a good opportunity to ask questions and might stimulate them to do the same and look at something in a new light or at another level.
- For both options A and B, use resources around you to bring more knowledge in and potentially further the discussions. Consider also some days after trying these exercises to bring up something the child mentioned to remind them about their curiosity on a topic – here you reinforce you remember something they had come up with. This may aid them to feel confident about their discoveries.

Finally

If you found any of the interventions challenging, or after reading this you are questioning where you lie on the spectrum when it comes to this strength, I would challenge you to take 15 minutes reflection time where you consider:

- How is your attention?
- Are you good at focussing on one thing or easily distracted?
- Have you become a multi-tasker?

Reflect on if your answers to this may have an impact on your level of curiosity. Consider if that then gives you thought on something else to work on first! Psychologist Csikszentmihalyi (1990) noted that unless we really focus attention on something then will not become something of curiosity.

I would love to hear your feedback on how my interventions work for you. Let me know!
info@pcc.life

References

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. New York: Harper Collins.

Niemiec, R. M. 2018. *Character Strengths Interventions: A Field Guide for Practitioners*. Boston: Hogrefe.

Extra Reading

<https://www.viacharacter.org/character-strengths/curiosity>

<https://www.strengthsmining.com/via-strengths/wisdom-and-knowledge/curiosity/>

[340 Ways to Use VIA Character Strengths](#) (Tayyab Rashid and Afroze Anjum the authors offer 4 ways to use Curiosity)

My interest in strengths comes from research I am publishing next year which showed that when enabled to identify their strengths, participants experienced a number of positive emotions and became immediately engaged with the strengths they picked out. After just an hour of identifying their strengths the participants were using them, reflecting on them and finding new meaning in them.

This is written by Alexandra a positive psychology practitioner, coach and mentor. Alexandra is founder of the Positive Coaching Centre, www.pcc.life and is a member of the British Psychological Society. She holds a master's degree in Applied Positive Psychology and Coaching Psychology from the University of East London (UK).

Alexandra has over 20 years of experience working in leadership roles in investment fund administration and more recently fraud intelligence and prevention. If you are interested in learning more about your strengths, or creating a new mindset, using new tools and pursuing your goals – be in touch!



Mail: info@pcc.life

Web: www.pcc.life

