

Cultivating Curiosity

By Terre Short



Decades ago, I would have never guessed that Curious George might provide leadership guidance. Being curious is foundational to honing emotional and intuitive intelligence. The main components of emotional intelligence (EQ): self-awareness, motivation, self-regulation, empathy, and relationship building are all served by a robust curiosity. Intuitive intelligence, or implicit learning, knowledge and pattern recognition is also enhanced by cultivating curiosity.

Curious George, for those who missed this beloved children's book character, saw the world unfiltered. Anything was possible in the worldview of this mischievous monkey. I recall lots of adventures and a life filled with joy. Questioning seemed innate to this primate. Curiosity can elevate what I know about myself as well as others and expose a whole lot in-between the two.

What does it look like to be curious? Let's break it into the components of emotional intelligence and consider a few powerfully curious questions.

1. Self-awareness

- a. What value did/do I bring today?
- b. What am I most proud of accomplishing?
- c. What do I wish to do more of?
- d. What are my key strengths and how do I leverage them daily?
- e. What do I value most?

2. Motivation

- a. What are my top 3 priorities for today?
- b. How will I celebrate my accomplishments today?
- c. How have I shared my goals?
- d. What am I learning from challenges/obstacles to my accomplishments?

3. Self-regulation

- a. Which words support and uplift me?
- b. What triggers me?
- c. What response is aligned with my intention and values?
- d. What key strategies can I use to diffuse a reaction?

4. Empathy

- a. How well do I actively listen? How can I be sure?
- b. What feeling am I hearing?
- c. How can I hold space for the other person's experience?
- d. How would I want to be treated if I felt this way?

5. Relationship building

- a. What do I know about this other person?

- b. What are they most proud of?
- c. What do they value most?
- d. What inspires them?
- e. How might I elevate them?
- f. What are non-verbal cues telling me?

When we pause and seek the answers to such questions, we are expanding our ability to leverage our emotional intelligence. We are allowing our emotional intelligence skills to distill the data available to us, which in turn improves how we show up in the world. When we exercise the same curiosity to inform our inner knowing, we are developing our intuitive intelligence. When we accept the information, we gain by asking such questions, our knowing is instinctive and perceptive. We all have this ability and from what I have observed, the more curious among us are those who lean more on their intuitive insights.

In the article *Intuitive Intelligence, Self-regulation, and Lifting Consciousness*, McCraty and Zayas provide a thorough overview of how learning can create a new baseline for “intuitive capacity and deeper wisdom.” They assert that, “Intuitive perception is commonly acknowledged to play an important role in business decisions and entrepreneurship, learning, creativity, medical diagnosis, healing, spiritual growth, and overall well-being.” With so many benefits, it behooves us to develop a better understanding of how we grow our intuitive muscle and how it serves us daily. Cultivating curiosity is a step in that direction.

Another way to look at this is how a hunch, feeling, inspiration, perception, gut reaction might be informed by a heightened state of curiosity. What if you perceived or felt a colleague or direct report was disengaged, and this inner knowing allowed you to drop into a place of curiosity. You could become a witness without judgment and ask powerful questions of yourself and the other person. Notice that each question on the list above begins with “what” or “how” as “why” can sometimes imply a sense of judgment. Although the list above is formatted for self-reflection, each question can be turned into a question to be asked of another to understand more fully.

Other behaviors of this level of leadership intelligence are active listening, thinking holistically, practicing situational awareness, and recognizing limiting mental models. Each of these behaviors is exponentially more beneficial when supported by consistent curiosity. Perhaps Curious George would have made a great leader, one who believed in the unlimited potential of himself and all he served.

Are you curious about your own growth and how to accelerate it? Join us at our upcoming retreat [Ignite and Sustain the Joy of Leadership](#), March 25-27 at the Mount Madonna Retreat Center in the Santa Cruz mountains.

Resource: *Intuitive Intelligence, Self-regulation, and Lifting Consciousness* - Rollin McCraty, PhD, and Maria Zayas, EdD. Journal article in Global Advances in Health And Medicine - Volume 3, Number 2 • March 2014 • www.gahmj.com