

How Curiosity Can Help You Overcome Suffering

“Curiosity killed the cat, but satisfaction brought it back.” –

An old spin on an old, stupid anti-curiosity adage

I’ve written before about how curiosity can be a source of meaning in an otherwise meaningless world.

More commonly, it can just be a good way to deal with a hard day.

This morning I was helping to host a breakfast with some friends. Everyone had filed out, and I was quietly cleaning up the eating area we had set up. Then a little kid hit his head on something and started to cry loudly.

The silence had not lasted long.

Fortunately, this little boy had his father with him. Unfortunately, nothing his father could do could console him.

Then all of a sudden, the crying stopped.

A little crawly bug had caught the child’s attention. This boy went from bawling for his mother to following the bug intently (barely even noticing or needing his parents), chattering curiously and happily about the bug’s movement. This little curious creature kept the child engaged far longer than his own misery did.

For this child, curiosity about the world around him proved to be more powerful than the pain he found himself in.

I wouldn’t have noticed this except that I’ve seen in more than one occasion how an overpowering curiosity can do this.

I’ve lived through a couple of rounds of layoffs at this point in my career. On the worse occasion, one of my coworkers was facing down the reality of picking up the pieces of their work after losing several team members. The only thing keeping them going? Curiosity about what it would take to continue operating. Curiosity about what life would be like now. Curiosity about whether success was now achievable.

I believe this person was telling the truth. Because to tell the truth, that was what helped to keep me going also. I have been frightened or sad or depressed at multiple other points in

my work – enough to wonder if maybe I should give up – but I always fall back on curiosity. Sure, things may be bad. **But what if I could succeed here?**

Typically the curiosity to find out is enough to get me back into the ring for one more round. And if it's good enough for the little boy at breakfast today, it's good enough for me.

It's amazing what curiosity can get you through. Don't underestimate it. Don't overestimate the costs of following it. It's usually a pretty low-risk endeavor, and the rewards are great.