



WHEN CURIOSITY IS NO LONGER CUTE

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Have you ever heard the saying, “Curiosity killed the cat”? A search online will yield what the idiom means: that too much inquisitiveness about something could prove dangerous, even lethal to some respects. Considering that cats are purported to have nine lives, that saying is certainly something to be feared. When a cat dies, it’s supposed to have several more lives left. So when it gets killed, then that’s really saying something about how dangerous curiosity can be, right?

But does this mean that we have to quit being curious?

I have read somewhere that we must never stop asking why. Victor Hugo once said “Diamonds are found only in the dark places of the earth; truths are found only in the depths of thought.” When we put our thoughts to work mulling things over and over again, poking and turning them this way and that, we facilitate learning.

When we were kids, those who asked questions were said to be the intellectual ones. The fact that no answer would ever suffice for them made them great learners, eventually good leaders. We’d hear remarks like, “My son’s so inquisitive, always asking questions. He might turn out to be a scientist when he grows up.” Or some other lofty profession.

Those of us who simply kept quiet were relegated to the mediocre group, having absolutely no ambition.

Now, I beg to differ.

Although I encourage my children to ask questions, I do so with sensible advice. I tell them to ask sensible, thought-provoking questions, ones that entail a chain of other intelligent questions. I dislike it when they merely caption the obvious. Of course, some of you might say I just don’t have the time to answer all their questions. But the truth of the matter is, I want them to learn to find answers using the tools they have at their disposal. I do not have all the answers. When we were kids, we didn’t have online dictionaries and thesauruses, but now they do. At one click of the mouse, they can find information they want. They have online newspapers, phone applications and all manner of technological systems at their disposal.

Nowadays, answering questions that pertain to life and survival are pertinent, while minor ones need to be done hard work on. I encourage my kids to learn to use the computer while guiding them on what sites are not reliable or good to see.

I guess with the pace we live in now, curiosity has attained its own time and space. If we let our children rely on us for all the answers in the world, they might grow up to be dependent on others for answers. Sometimes, it’s best to teach them to rely on their own ability to find good, reliable answers for themselves, sometimes not necessarily the truth. But at least they are able to exert effort to satisfy their own curiosity independently.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. When is curiosity good? When is it bad?
2. Why is curiosity an important part of learning?
3. How do you satisfy your own curiosity?
4. Is it advisable to completely rely on online sources for all questions that we have? Why or why not?
5. How would you encourage learning in your own child?