



Nurturing the Natural Curiosity of Children

In the introduction to a collection of *Curious George* books, the editor quotes one person's response about why they liked the books: "George did all the things we didn't dare to do, so we could do them in our imagination and not be scared." Curiosity, especially when mixed with courage and imagination, helps us understand our world and is something to encourage in our children right from the start.

Why curiosity is important

- Helps children develop their whole selves, including their minds
- Provides answers to many of the mysteries of daily life: What happens when I do that?
- Increases children's potential to learn new things and builds confidence in the ability to learn and grow
- Enhances children's ability to be open-minded and tolerant of different ways of handling challenges
- Contributes to their enjoyment and awareness of the world



How curiosity fades

- **Fear**—when a child is afraid, she won't explore and will stick with the familiar
- **Disapproval**—when a child hears "Don't" all the time, his desire to experiment will decrease
- **Absence**—when a child doesn't have a caring adult to share his new experiences or offer safety when trying new things, he may stop trying

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How to encourage the natural curiosity of children

- Show your own interest in what's happening in your world.
- Encourage children to pursue their own interests (music, play, books).
- Answer questions simply, clearly, factually and in keeping with the child's developmental stage.
- Ask open-ended questions (How do you feel about ____? Why is green your favorite color?).
- Redirect a child's interest, but don't discourage it (e.g., if he likes to pour his cup of water on the floor, provide opportunities to experiment with water in the bathtub or backyard).
- Provide toys that encourage a child's imagination and aren't limited in their use.
- Praise a child's discoveries of new things and efforts to master new skills .
- Encourage children to explore their natural surroundings and look for answers to their own questions.

R E S O U R C E S

Tips on Nurturing Your Child's Curiosity, Zero to Three; <http://bit.ly/2YuOfYx>

Emotional Development: Curiosity—The Fuel of Development,
by Bruce Perry, M.D.; <http://bit.ly/2YdOnws>

Five Ways to Develop Your Child's Curiosity, Scholastic;
<https://www.scholastic.com/parents/school-success/learning-toolkit-blog/5-easy-ways-to-develop-your-childs-curiosity.html>

Programs and families can contact the program leadership directly at PAIECMH@pakeys.org with questions or concerns.

