

Conjuring Up Courage #106

Featured this episode: Shohreh Davoodi

Shohreh Davoodi: You are listening to episode #106 of Conjuring Up Courage. In my work and life, I regularly talk about the importance of curiosity, and I thought it was time to expand on why that is. In this solo episode, I discuss the benefits of staying curious and share tips for how you can cultivate more curiosity.

To access the show notes and a full transcript of this episode, head to shohrehdavoodi.com/106. That's shohrehdavoodi.com/106. The show notes also include a free downloadable worksheet with a summary of the six strategies I talk about in this episode, plus three bonus practices to help you nurture your sense of curiosity.

This episode is brought to you in part by Ample + Rooted, an inclusive therapy practice that provides an affirming and welcoming home for diverse individuals to reclaim their inherent worth. The folks at Ample + Rooted created a guided meditation on cultivating self-trust just for listeners, and it's available in the show notes for this episode.

[Music plays]

This is Conjuring Up Courage, and I'm your host, Shohreh Davoodi. As a self-trust coach, I help people come home to themselves so they can be more of who they are, and less haunted by who they think they're supposed to be.

I created this podcast to celebrate what's possible when you commit to being brave. You'll hear from diverse guests who are refusing to let fear and self-doubt stop them from building fulfilling lives and creating a

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better world for everyone. I'll also teach you my favorite tools, strategies, and mindset shifts so you can do the same.

Consider this your invitation to stop living according to "shoulds" and to step into your motherfucking magic instead. Stay open, get curious, and let's grow together.

[Music fades]

Hi everyone. I hope that your summer is off to a great start so far. As for me, I finally moved into my new house about a month ago, and getting everything set up and trying to get settled has definitely been an exhausting adventure. Things are getting better. The floor is no longer completely covered in crap, but definitely not quite where I want to be.

I'm trying to just be patient, take things as they come, even though my natural inclination is like, I want everything to be in its place and I want everything to look pretty, that's just not possible given that I also have a job. You know, a business to run. A podcast to run. And also I have to feed myself and do other adulting things. So I'm just trying to take it one step at a time, and hopefully by the holidays, everything will look amazing.

As I'm recording this, I am also in the middle of my very first planned social media break since I started my business four and a half years ago. I say social media, but what I really mean is Instagram because that's where I spend the vast majority of my time online for my business.

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While I do have some lofty TikTok goals, as of right now, I haven't gotten to a place where I'm consistently putting out content there, so Instagram is the thing that I'm focusing on for this break.

And I have literally deleted the app from my phone. I do re-download it when I need it. For instance, I needed some emails from people's profiles to send out podcast interview invitations, and I have some scheduled content that I just download the app, post it, and then delete the app again. But in its place, I have put the GIPHY [pronounced with a soft "G"] app—I know, some of y'all are like, the GIPHY [pronounced with a hard "G"] app! No, fuck you. It's gif [soft "g"].

I know I just ignited, like, a whole shit storm and a bunch of you are going to DM me now and yell at me because I pronounce it gif [soft "g"], but guess what? I'm not on Instagram, so I won't see your DMs. [Evil laughter] Mwahahaha!

Anyway, my point is that I put the GIPHY app in the place where Instagram was because I wanted there to be something there that I don't usually open because it's triggering my brain to notice whenever I accidentally click into GIPHY because I think I'm clicking into Instagram. Yeah, that has been really intriguing to see how often, without even thinking, I navigate to what my brain thinks is Instagram to start scrolling, and I'm actually met with a bunch of gifs.

So it's helpful. This is why I do this kind of stuff, in terms of actually taking a break. Probably would have been great to have been doing

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this regularly up to this point, but I'm glad that I'm finally doing it and I'm already learning some things about myself.

Which is a perfect segue into today's topic, which is curiosity. If you've ever been a client of mine in any capacity, then you have likely heard me talk about curiosity and openness on repeat. They are two of my strongest values as a business owner, and they're also key components of developing deeper self-trust.

Unfortunately, curiosity is something that doesn't come easily to most adults, which is why I talk about it so much. In my experience, folks need encouragement to adopt a curious and open worldview because they're not primed to have that on their own. This is in contrast to kids, who have a lot of natural curiosity, and that's because children have large knowledge gaps. So asking questions helps them fill those in so they better understand what's happening around them and how they're expected to behave.

But once kids get into school, that natural curiosity often starts to get stifled. As an example, if you went to a school where the top expectation of teachers was that they prepare kids for standardized tests, then your teachers were probably more focused on formulas and making sure that kids got the right answer than on creative problem-solving.

And schools aren't the only place where curiosity can be snuffed out. Some environments are designed to dim curiosity to perpetuate

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imbalances of power. So if you grew up as part of certain religious institutions that had stringent views about right and wrong, or if you had parents or caregivers with black and white beliefs that were ultimately discriminatory, then you likely experienced having your questioning minimized as a way of keeping you in line.

So if you don't think of yourself as a very curious person currently, there's likely more to the story than that you're simply not wired that way. Because while some people may have a stronger inherent job for curiosity, and I would count myself in that category as a neurodiverse person, curiosity is not an immutable trait. It's not something you have or don't have. It's actually a skill that anyone can cultivate with intention and practice.

And clearly I think curiosity is a skill that's worth cultivating since I'm dedicating an entire episode to it. But instead of just taking my word for it, let me share some of the benefits of being curious.

Something I love about curiosity is that it's an active state of mind, not a passive one. Curious people won't settle for "that's just the way it is" type explanations. They seek out additional information and angles of understanding, and through the information they gather, they can make more intentional choices. When you start regularly asking questions about who you are, and what you want, and why you do the things that you do, that can help break you out of habits and patterns that aren't serving you anymore.

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I regularly utilize self-reflective questions with my self-trust coaching clients to help them get clarity on what kinds of changes to their lives would have the most impact. Plus, when you gather more information, whether it's about yourself or the world around you, it increases your overall knowledge pool so that it becomes easier for you to identify common threads between different areas of learning. When you can start applying knowledge and skills from one area to another seemingly unrelated area, that is fucking magical. Synthesizing is the shit.

And, fun fact: curiosity actually helps improve memory so that you can retain information better. And lord, do I need that in my life! I'm constantly like, this thing that does this, what is it, I don't know the word! And I have to ask other people to help me. So more curiosity, better memory.

Something that a lot of people struggle with is motivation to do shit. Motivation to make changes in their lives. And we know that extrinsic or external motivation runs out quickly and actually isn't particularly motivating compared to intrinsic or internal motivation. Well, curiosity is something that creates a sense of intrinsic motivation.

When you approach the world from a perspective of wanting to know more, and you think about things like, what would it be like, I wonder if I could do that, how would that feel, what if it was this way instead, that sparks continued interest to propel you forward. Curiosity can take off

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some of the pressure you put on yourself to arrive somewhere so you can focus on all the steps along the way.

And that allows curious people to open themselves up to new avenues and possibilities in their lives. There's so much in the world we don't see even when it's right in front of us because we're locked into our own patterns and judgments. Increasing your sense of curiosity can help you break out of those molds so you're able to notice things you otherwise would have missed. Which I know from personal experience can really bring a whole new level of fun and excitement to your life.

To give an example, as many of y'all know, last summer I got really into Monarch butterflies after I noticed the caterpillars and butterflies in my own backyard. I ended up doing a bunch of research on the Monarch life cycle, and I found it so fascinating that I bought equipment so I could raise them myself from egg to butterfly to give them a better chance of survival. And I also joined a Facebook group for troubleshooting.

If I hadn't been curious about discovering more about Monarchs, I never would have gotten to have those experiences, which were a huge highlight of my summer. So you just never know where your curiosity might take you.

The last benefit of curiosity that I want to share with you is that it helps you connect better with other people, whether it's romantic partners, colleagues, friends, or even strangers. When you assume you already

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know everything there is to know about another person, that cuts off any possibility of learning more or being proven wrong. But when you approach people with curiosity and you treat them as the complex, multifaceted humans that they are, you never know what you might discover. And that can foster more closeness and intimacy.

It can also help with conflict because you're more likely to be invested in discovering solutions than to double-down on your own perspective as the correct one.

[Music plays]

[Ad break]

Hey y'all. Let me take a moment to tell you a little bit more about Ample + Rooted, an inclusive therapy practice that is directed by my dear friend and colleague, Neathery Falchuk. The awesome practitioners at Ample + Rooted not only serve folks locally here in Austin, they also serve folks online all over the globe. Through therapy, mindfulness practices, courses, trainings, and events, they support, guide, and hold space for folks to feel valued and nourished.

We talk a lot about systems of oppression on the show and how they can disconnect you from your inner knowing. And the Ample + Rooted group believes it is your birthright to both inhabit and trust your physical and emotional self without shame.

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Luckily for y'all, the kind folks at Ample + Rooted created an exclusive guided meditation on cultivating self-trust for listeners of Conjuring Up Courage. You can access the free guided meditation and learn more about Ample + Rooted in the show notes for this episode.

[Music fades]

Hopefully I've now convinced you that it is worth it to work on becoming a more curious person, and I guess if I haven't, you might as well just turn this episode off and go do something else with your time. But for everyone else who is intrigued by the potential of increased curiosity, now is the part where I'm going to share strategies for nurturing curiosity in your life.

Because while it would be cool if you could just declare that you're going to be more curious from here on out, in my experience with clients, it takes a *little* more work than that to actually make it happen. So let's dive into six different strategies you can use to help you nurture your sense of curiosity.

The first strategy is simply asking more questions. Questions are a gateway to discovery, and what, where, when, why, and how—I feel like an elementary school teacher—are some of the best tools in a curious person's toolbox.

For some people, asking questions sounds great in theory, but is difficult in practice. You may have questions in mind, but be afraid to ask them because you're worried that a question will reflect poorly on

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you or that you should already know the answer. I've talked on the show before about how in adulthood, we can get a little hung up on feeling like we need to be the expert and should have all the answers.

Another reason you may be less inclined to ask questions is that you're afraid of what you'll discover if you do ask. I've seen this with a lot of folks when it comes to putting off doctor's appointments because they're afraid something will be wrong, or staying silent in relationships that aren't working for them because they're scared the relationship will end if they ask the questions that are coming up. And the thing to keep in mind in all of these situations is that not asking the question won't change the answer, it will just delay when you find it out.

If you have fears at play that prevent you from asking more questions, definitely see if you can get to the bottom of those and address them. You could also practice asking questions in other areas of your life that feel less fraught to initially build up this skill.

And, on the subject of asking questions, try to notice what kinds of questions you typically ask, too. In many situations, asking open-ended questions is going to elicit more interesting and wide-ranging responses than cutting off the conversation before it can even get going. Dating apps are a great example of an environment where open-ended questions create better results. If every question you ask someone you're getting to know can be answered with a "yes" or a "no" or just a couple of words, keeping the conversation going will be like pulling teeth.

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The second strategy for nurturing your sense of curiosity is also applicable for dating apps, and really, all conversations. And it's practicing active, non-judgmental listening. When we're in conversation with others and we're more focused on what we're gonna say next than we are on what the other person is saying, that doesn't lend itself to fruitful conversations. Neither does shaming and blaming the person that we're speaking with.

But when we can meet people with curiosity, even when we disagree, that opens up more options and paths forward. I try to view each conversation I have with someone I care about, even really hard conversations, as an opportunity to understand them better. And conversations with strangers can lead to gleaning all sorts of knowledge and stories. However, that's only true if I'm listening to hear them instead of listening to respond.

And, just to clarify, there are, of course, exceptions to this. You do not have to entertain the opinions and beliefs of people who are committed to misunderstanding you or people who think you don't deserve the same rights as the most privileged. I will certainly not fault you for reserving your kind and curious conversations for people that have earned the right to have them with you.

So the takeaway here is that the way we communicate can unintentionally stifle our curiosity, but we can adjust for that by being more intentional about how we show up in conversations.

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The third strategy for nurturing your sense of curiosity is getting more comfortable with not knowing things and being able to admit when you don't know something. Back when I was an undergraduate student at UW Madison, I worked as a campus tour guide. Shout out to the best TG class ever, Spring '08! And when I was in training to become a tour guide, one of the things we were taught was that if we were asked a question we didn't know the answer to, instead of making something up, we should say that we didn't know and tell the person we'd be happy to help them find the answer after the tour.

Admittedly, I can guarantee you there were times I made up answers on tours to simplify things. Sorry, Jessica! But that sentiment has stuck with me, particularly because I used to really struggle with what people would think of me if I didn't always know the answers. I'm sure I'm not alone in this, but my natural inclination when someone asks me, have you heard about this band, have you seen this movie, do you know this celebrity, is to just say, "yep," even when I have no idea what they're talking about because I hate the thought of people judging me for not knowing things.

I really had to work on getting it through my head that not knowing something doesn't reflect negatively on me and isn't a mark against my character. Hell, it's a much better character trait to be comfortable admitting when you don't know something than to lie about it or deflect. And curious people have learned this lesson, which is also why they tend to be more okay with being wrong and changing their minds

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in general. They understand that unlearning and relearning is part of growth over time.

The other piece of this is getting comfortable with the fact that not all things are knowable. Some aspects of life, and human behavior, and our very existence remain a mystery. Multiple truths often coexist. And yes, that can be scary and disconcerting, but curiosity can be driven by the questions themselves just as much as the answers.

So repeat after me, y'all: I don't know everything. I couldn't know everything if I tried. And that's just fucking fine.

The fourth strategy for nurturing your sense of curiosity is seeking out opportunities to keep learning, try new things, and explore. I've noticed that it's common for people to stop actively looking for fresh learning opportunities once they're finished with formal schooling and settled into a routine with work, but it's one of the best ways to continue growing as a person and to find deeper levels of fulfillment and enjoyment in your life.

Reading is a classic way to take in new information, whether that's reading physical books, listening to audiobooks, or subscribing to different newspapers and online publications. I obviously think podcasts can be a great learning tool, so pat yourself on the back for listening to this one. TV and movies can definitely fit the bill too. It just depends on what you're watching and with what intention. In general, if you follow

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your interests and keep an eye out for things you find fascinating, that can lead you in some exciting directions.

Then, there's a willingness to try new things. Off the bat, let me say that if you struggle to start or keep up with new things, go listen to episode #93. It's titled "Why You Keep Quitting and What You Can Do To Change That," and I will link to it in the show notes for you. But there are so many possible options with this one, from trying new foods and new bars to trying out new hobbies and experiences to meeting new people.

An example from my own life is that I try to listen to my Spotify Discovery Weekly playlist regularly. It's a playlist Spotify puts together for me with songs and artists that it thinks I will like. Maybe 75% of the songs I don't care for, but I've found some great songs and artists in the remaining 25% that I may never have stumbled across otherwise.

Here's the thing: you don't have to love, or even like, everything that you try. In fact, it's highly unlikely that you'll love or like everything that you try. The trying is the important part. Because no matter what your experience ultimately is, you've gathered data about your personal preferences.

And for those of you out there who are scoffing right now and you're thinking, "Well, Shohreh, I don't need to try new things because I already know what I like," I hear you. The comfort bubble is a warm and safe place, and I understand why you want to stay there.

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I'm not saying you should compromise your values or embark on adventures you know with certainty you will despise. But there's a whole big world out there, and I guarantee you that you have not discovered everything you have the capacity to enjoy yet. An easy place to start is taking a look at the things you already like and figuring out what some of the standout qualities of those things are. Then you can look for new things that have the same or similar qualities to see if you might like those, too.

Routines are great. Having things you already love is awesome. And, the possibilities are endless if you're willing to open yourself up to all of the things you haven't discovered yet.

The fifth strategy for nurturing your sense of curiosity is dedicating time to be present in your environment without the distraction of looking at electronic devices or listening to audio. I promise this is not a rant in the vain of, [parody grandma voice] "The youths are on their phones too much and they're ruining the economy!" I don't—like, what grandma voice was that that I just attempted? Not just a normal elderly person. You tell me.

Anyway, I love my phone, I scroll on it a lot. I also love listening to music and audiobooks on my phone when I'm doing other stuff. But I've found that when I don't take purposeful breaks, even if just for a few minutes at a time, it can shut down my curiosity and creativity.

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Most of us are in the habit of using our phones to keep boredom at bay and to fill silences. And I think there's a beneficial shift to be had in thinking of boredom as a nudge to get curious about your surroundings and to see if there's anything to discover by being more present. Maybe that's people watching, studying the space that you're in, asking yourself questions about why things are the way they are, or turning looking around into a game.

Something I like to do is purposefully go for walks without my headphones in so I give myself opportunities to engage more with nature and my neighborhood than I do on my walks with background noise. These walks give me a deeper appreciation for the trees, plants, wildlife, houses, and other nuances of the place where I live.

So yeah, think of boredom as a chance to engage curiously with the world around you. I promise you can put your headphones back in or go right back to scrolling after a few minutes.

The sixth and final strategy for nurturing your sense of curiosity is to carve out a place to collect your thoughts and ideas. You never know when inspiration will strike or an exciting question will nestle its way into your brain, and if you have a place to funnel those thoughts and ideas, you'll be less likely to forget them.

I prefer electronic notetaking, so I use Evernote, and I specifically pay for the pro version because I have a very complex arrangement of notes where I write down everything for work and my personal life. I also

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keep a lot of stuff organized in Google Drive in docs and spreadsheets. And I even have a Spotify playlist where I keep a list of songs I want to learn on ukulele.

Journals and planners are great. Some people like to keep a notepad and pen in every room in their house. Some people like to record voice notes on their phones. And I also know they make waterproof notepads for people who have lightbulb moments in the shower. So it's just about finding the right option for you and making sure to use it.

And if you're someone who doesn't have an issue with writing stuff down, but you do struggle to remember to review what you have written, then you might benefit from some kind of recurring calendar alert that reminds you to occasionally go back through all of your notes.

And there you have it, y'all. I've now covered a bunch of benefits of nurturing curiosity in your life, as well as six strategies to help you do so. If you didn't write all that down, you are in luck. In the show notes, I've included a free downloadable worksheet with a summary of the six strategies I talked about in this episode, plus three bonus practices to help you get into the habit of being more curious. You can snag that at shohrehdavoodi.com/106. That's shohrehdavoodi.com/106.

If you can dedicate some time to practicing curiosity, eventually it will become second nature and you won't even have to think about it.

Thanks for listening, everyone!

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And that's our show for today. If you're enjoying Conjuring Up Courage, don't forget to subscribe through your podcast provider of choice so you never miss an episode. Additionally, if you haven't left a rating and review in the Apple Podcasts app yet, you can do so from any Apple device to help more people find and benefit from the show. I also love hearing from listeners, so feel free to take a screenshot from your podcast player, post on social media, and tag me. My username is @ShohrehDavoodi on all platforms. Finally, you can sign up for my email newsletter, The Sunday Share, and get more details about how to work with me by going to ShohrehDavoodi.com. Thank you so much for listening, and I hope you'll join me for the next episode.

[Music fades]