

Westside Notes



A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step

The Curiosity Project

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The Curiosity Project magically emerged in my life during a time of great losses. I was thirty-years-old and did not yet know how to hold so much loss. I was sitting on my front porch in Los Angeles; heartbroken, stuck, staring down the barrel of another beautiful sunny day. This was when the gift appeared. A voice within me said, *I cannot do this again today. I cannot sit here and eat my feelings like cake.* Then a solution, *Go do things you've never done before.*

I was in a tremendous amount of pain, and so I followed the voice. I spent that week in mediocre exploration. I made a pact to do one new thing a day for seven days. I got coffee at places I'd never gotten coffee, I went to see roses at botanical gardens I hadn't known existed, I took new roads to known locations. But the voice had said something else, it had said to narrate the experience for myself, and so I did. I felt

insane as I went into a new grocery store saying, *now we are at a grocery store that we'd never been to before, we are getting groceries here.*

At the end of my seven-day trial I did not stop; I did not stop because for the first time in months, I was beginning to feel the ground under my feet. I felt a sense of optimism. I began to touch a feeling, a resilience within. It made me feel better and so it became a daily part of my life. At some point I began adding my name, *Oh Jenny we are looking at beautiful roses.* I did not question it. I have relied upon The Curiosity Project for over a decade now to help me recalibrate in difficult times. I am forever grateful for that voice within that day, and that I was surrendered enough to listen.

When I began to learn more about Neuroplasticity in graduate school this experience began to align for me. The Curiosity Project was generating Neuroplasticity in my brain, and thus allowing for a shift in perspective.

Let's just for fun envision the brain as a seventy-year-old man in an easy chair in 1965, watching the nightly news. Chances are it would be difficult to get that man out of his chair until his next routine move. The brain loves routine because it signals that we are not in danger, we are doing exactly what we did yesterday, and we did not die. Now let's say that the fire alarm goes off in the house, that he smells smoke; I would guess that man would burst right out of that chair.

When we wake up in the morning to the same breakfast, take the same route to work, do the same job, take the same route home, watch the same programs, order the same take out, the brain gets lazy, gets

stuck in its ways, fills in the blanks without really seeing. The Curiosity Project makes the brain nervous, suddenly it is forced to pay attention again so that we do not die. It's like putting fire under hardened plastic - we can then begin redesigning our perspective, our shape in the world.

I also learned that when we say our own names our brain becomes more alert, which I think is cute; we are calling on ourselves. I was narrating my brain to begin to see again after trauma had taken my sight.

The definition of the word curiosity is a desire to know, interest leading to inquiry. The Latin root of curiosity is the adjective curiosus, meaning careful or inquisitive. Curiosity is a pathway into our selves, and that pathway can be scary. I believe that the hardest work we will ever do in a lifetime is to learn how to listen to our selves; to learn how to follow our own loving direction. When my clients embark on The Curiosity Project they inevitably want to start big, they want to tackle goals, such as surfing or writing. I tell them to start with milk; go somewhere else to get your milk. I tell them to take baby steps, baby steps to a big curious life.