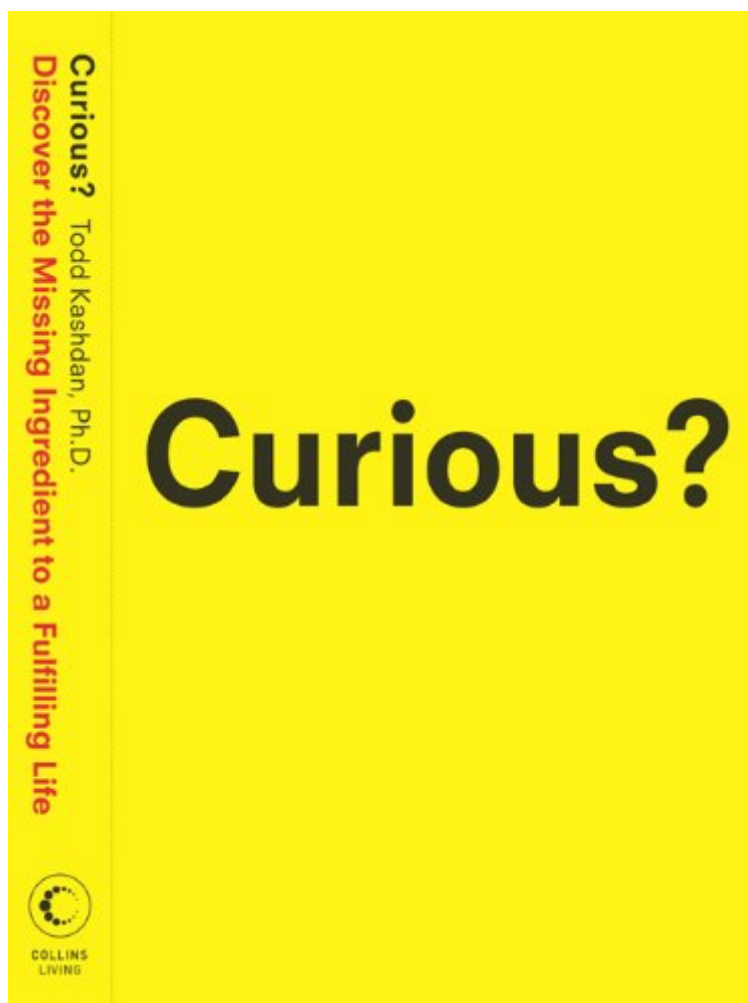




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# Curious?: Discover The Missing Ingredient To A Fulfilling Life



## Synopsis

“Curious? is one of those rare books that can make you rethink how you see the world.”  
•Arianna Huffington “This is the perfect book to read when you are having second thoughts about challenging yourself to explore that next step in life!”  
•Stephen Post, Ph.D., coauthor of *Why Good Things Happen to Good People* Discover the missing ingredient to a fulfilling life with *Curious?* In this fascinating, enlightening volume, renowned psychology professor Todd Kashdan reveals how cultivating curiosity is the road to happy, healthy, and meaningful living and the true key to falling in love with life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Interesting book

when all added, why do percentages in *Pie of Life* seem to exceed 100%? Or have I missed something?

Generally speaking, I like this book. However, to me there are a few things that are troubling. Not troubling in a global sense, but troubling as in a little annoying. My first observation is that I don't think Todd fully understands the science of positive psychology. My second observation is that Todd seems to know very little about the science of evolutionary psychology. My third observation is that I think Todd has been negatively influenced by his training as a clinical psychologist (the study of human misery) in a way that has blinded him to what positive psychology and evolutionary psychology are really all about. Todd writes on pages 12 and 13, "In the often one-sided focus on positive experiences and strengths, positive psychology, and happiness researchers underestimate the the value of negative feelings, uncertainty, and stress." Nothing could be further from the truth. Those who study positive psychology are well aware of negative feelings, uncertainty, and stress, but we also know how powerful they are and intrude whether we want them to or not. The science of positive psychology fully embraces the ubiquity and power of the negative. The best antidote for the negative is the science of positive psychology. These negatives do not go away; they are merely managed. No positive psychology scholar or researcher ignores negative thoughts and feelings as the author says they do! He recommends that "Both positive and negative need to be addressed." Todd, they are addressed directly by the interventions of the science of positive psychology! What is so ironic is that in the process of taking shots at positive psychology and ignoring the science of evolutionary psychology, Todd hails the virtue of curiosity, which is a positive psychology intervention, although he avoided saying so! On page 23, Todd begins a discussion of "Curiosity Is a Counterbalance to Certainty, Closure, and Confidence." On page 24, he writes that "...I need to be clear that none of us should be embarrassed or blame ourselves if we feel the need to be certain." The drive for certainty is hard-wired into our brains. We know unequivocally from the science of evolutionary psychology that humans have a brain module for certainty and closure. I agree that curiosity is laudable and should be pursued and expanded and I agree that we should develop this skill, but in the process Todd throws out the baby with the bath water in making statements about positive psychology and our genetically-determined human tendencies without proper knowledge or nuance. Todd writes an entire book about curiosity, which is a positive psychology intervention, but then writes about it as if it is not!! I'll write more later as I continue to plow through the book!

This is one of what seems to be an exploding genre, I would guess based largely on the success of Daniel Gilbert's "Stumbling on Happiness," where academic psychologists doing work related to positive psychology take their basic area of research and try to translate it for a mass audience. Others include "The Happiness Hypothesis" by Haidt, "Positivity" by Fredrickson, "Happiness" by

the Dieners, "The How of Happiness" by Lyubomirsky, etc.. A cynic would say they are cashing in (as Colbert might say--let the market decide), but being more generous one might say they are simply trying to make psychological science accessible. Either way, you can't really blame them. Most of these folks do good research and such work should have accessible outlets. Todd Kashdan, the author of "Curious" is not at this point among the top academic psychologists in these areas (as are, say, Fredrickson or Haidt or Diener--Kashdan after all is very productive but also still pretty young) but he has done some useful research, he has some interesting stories, and his style probably appeals to a more youthful market niche. The fundamental insight of this book, that simply reframing life events by using the lens of curiosity can help a person thrive, is useful. It made me think some about how I might reframe the way I approach situations that cause me anxiety--being in unfamiliar and crowded places, for example--by drawing on my abundant curiosity. What, I'm trying to ask myself, is interesting to observe in this unfamiliar and crowded place. Beyond the basic insight, however, this particular book does not add a lot to the positive psychology genre. The chapter on relationships, for example, is fine--lots of research shows that good relationships matter a lot for well-being. But that is pretty widely discussed elsewhere. This book also teeters on that slippery slope of many pop psychology books promising to have the one panacea for happiness. At points the book is reasonable and notes that curiosity works for some people and can help some of the time, but it alone is not enough. At other points, however, it slips into grand and problematic claims such as "what is the central ingredient to creating a fulfilling life? The answer is curiosity." Not really. Curiosity has its place, as does this book, but the major problem in the pop positive psychology genre is the claim that the answer to "creating a fulfilling life" is as simple as whatever the author's line of research happens to be. In fact, each line of research, however worthy, is just a part of a much bigger puzzle.

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