

# Seek with Scott Shigeoka

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It's a deeper sense of questions. Gets you to more of the stories and the insights and the values of who someone is.

That was Scott Shigeoka On psychologists off the clock We are four experts in psychology here to bring you cutting edge and science based ideas from psychology to help you flourish in your relationships, work, and health.

[00:00:57] **Debbie Sorensen:** I'm Dr. Debbie Sorensen, a clinical [00:01:00] psychologist practicing in Mile High, Denver, Colorado, and author of Act for Burnout, Act Daily Journal, and the Act Daily Card Deck.

[00:01:07] **Emily Edlynn:** From America's Heartland, I'm Dr. Emily Edlynn a clinical psychologist based in Chicago, Illinois, and author of Autonomy Supportive Parenting.

[00:01:15] **Michael Herold:** Calling in from Vienna, Austria. I'm Michael Herold, ACT coach, confidence trainer, and author of an upcoming book on being a better conversationalist and making friends.

[00:01:24] **Jill Stoddard:** And from coastal New England, I'm Dr. Jill Stoddard, author of Be Mighty, The Big Book of Act Metaphors, and Impostor No More.

[00:01:31] **Emily Edlynn:** We hope you take what you learned here to build a rich and meaningful life.

[00:01:35] **Michael Herold:** Thank you for listening to Psychologists Off The Clock. I'm here with Michael to introduce today's episode with Scott Shigeoka to talk about his book, Seek, which is all about the power of deep curiosity. So

Michael, you told me that you have already listened to this episode twice because you were, I guess, so curious [00:02:00] about curiosity. So tell me what your takeaway was.

Yeah. I love this interview because curiosity is a superpower. So when I work with my clients, it's primarily around building their confidence. and or building up their communication skills.

And in both domains, curiosity is so important. And in regards to confidence, it's because curiosity and anxiety can't really exist in the same space. It's like a little bit of a zero sum game. The more curiosity you bring in, the more anxiety you push out. So for example, what if I asked that person out and he or she rejects me?

Compared to I wonder how he or she is going to react when I send my question like this, or what if these people don't want to talk to me, compared with, I wonder what will happen if I just tell them a joke, or if I walk up to them and I say, X, Y, and Z. And in communication as well, because the moment you bring curiosity to [00:03:00] a conversation, and Scott makes this point in the interview really well, when you bring curiosity to a conversation, you just leave the shallow level of small talk.

become more personal. You become more invested in the communication.

[00:03:13] **Jill Stoddard:** That is so interesting. I have never thought about the relationship between curiosity and anxiety and as I'm, kind of marinating on it right now, what I think it's bringing to mind that actually was in my conversation with Scott is when you bring up these, this example of two different ways to think about a situation in the former, the one that you say is more anxious way of thinking through a question, it's making an assumption about a specific outcome that's creating some anxiety. And I imagine this is meant to be adaptive, like, let me try to resolve the uncertainty by assuming what I think the outcome might be, but the assumption is creating the anxiety.

And Scott and I really talk about the importance of detaching from Assumptions that, that that's part of his dive model for curiosity. [00:04:00] And that's essentially what you're talking about is so detached from the assumption that some catastrophic outcome is going to occur and instead have this more like open ended wondering, right?

Curiosity of like where this could go. And I really did not think about the role that that would play in the emotions that might be present there. So that's fascinating to me.

[00:04:23] **Michael Herold:** it's a little bit the difference between, Oh no, what if X happens versus I wonder what's going to happen when I do X.

[00:04:34] **Jill Stoddard:** Yeah, it's like you're open to the possibilities, and the possibilities could be many, rather than the assumption of this one catastrophe.

[00:04:42] **Michael Herold:** and Jill, you've also pointed at something else that I loved in the interview because here's the problem with curiosity and I think maybe listening to us, our listeners might have picked up on that a little bit. It's really hard to give a, how am I curious? Like what do I do? What do I say? How, like I get [00:05:00] why I need curiosity.

But how do I actually do curiosity and Scott, for the first time in my professional life, Scott gives a really good framework that is like, this is how you do it. Here are your four steps. Go work through them. You talk about this at the end of the interview. And Yeah. It's just like, this is the how to, this is, this is how you do it.

[00:05:22] **Jill Stoddard:** Yeah, and he, in the book, he gives a number of example questions for how, you know, instead of the sort of closed ended, small talky type, he talks about how to ask curious questions, and even has some examples. Of what those questions might be. And this was one of those interviews. I really wish that we had had more time and, we don't even get through the whole model because we just had so much to talk about and he was so interesting and compelling and such a likable guy too.

So I think people will really get a lot out of this interview and we hope you enjoy it as much as Michael and I [00:06:00] did.

Hey everybody, it's Jill here, and I'm especially excited about my guest today, Scott Shigeoka, who I quote unquote met on social media because We share a publisher and both have books coming out around the same time.

So Scott is an internationally recognized curiosity expert, speaker, and author. He is known for translating research into strategies that promote positive wellbeing and connected relationships around the globe, including at the UC Berkeley's greater good science center. And through his groundbreaking courses at the university of Texas at Austin, Scott implements his curiosity practices in

the public sector, fortune 500 companies, Hollywood, media organizations, education institutions, and small businesses. And Scott's new book, *Seek, How Curiosity Can Transform Your Life and Change the World* is coming out November 15th, which I think is the date that we're releasing this [00:07:00] episode.

And that is what he is here

[00:07:01] **Scott Shigeoka:** Yay.

[00:07:02] **Jill Stoddard:** about today. So Scott, congratulations.

[00:07:05] **Scott Shigeoka:** Thank and congrats to you too.

[00:07:08] **Jill Stoddard:** Thank you.

[00:07:09] **Scott Shigeoka:** Yeah, it is my first book. It's my debut. I'm excited.

[00:07:11] **Jill Stoddard:** congratulations. I understand that there was an auction and lots of interest and excitement from publishers over this book. And I can certainly see why. I'm really excited to talk to you about it today. So thank you for being here.

[00:07:23] **Scott Shigeoka:** you. Yeah. Thanks so much for having me.

[00:07:25] **Jill Stoddard:** So let's jump in and as I was reading, I was having this thought that, Oh, like curiosity, it's like the opposite of assumption.

And then later in the book, you talk very specifically about assumptions and biases. And so, think while we all kind of have like an amorphous sense of what we mean by curiosity, I thought maybe we could start with what you mean. By curiosity, before we jump into an entire conversation

[00:07:50] **Scott Shigeoka:** Totally. Yeah. So halfway through the conversation, people were like, wait, what is this person talking about? Yeah. No, I, I love starting with definitions. So the way that most [00:08:00] folks define curiosity is a desire to know. I like to say curiosity is on a spectrum though. So you have what I call shallow curiosity, the desire to know, you know, the trees in your backyard, or when you meet someone for the first time, you ask questions like, what's your name?

Or where do you live? Or. What do you do for work? They're sort of data or information points. They help you with learning about sort of high level things about another person. They help you with trivia, you know, getting all the facts you need. But as you move along the spectrum of curiosity there's another form of curiosity, which is what my book is all about.

And that is deep curiosity. So that's the desire to know as a Force for connection and as a force for transformation. So we dive beneath the surface, we learn more about the people in front of us. Instead of asking what's your name, we might ask, what's the story of your name? Or who named you? And what's your relationship to them and can you tell me about that?

And you know, instead of asking what do you do for work, we might ask, when will I know you're [00:09:00] really flourishing? Like, what makes you come alive in life? How can I support you on that journey? What does that look like? So it's a deeper sense of questions. Gets you to more of the stories and the insights and the values of who someone is.

And you know, there's a ton of, books about shallow curiosity. But I really wanted to focus on more of this deep curiosity. How do we really get to see someone, know them, understand them, so that they feel like they matter? 'cause at the end of the day, that's what Curiosity offers. It helps people feel like they really matter.

[00:09:27] **Jill Stoddard:** Yeah. I love that. And one of the things that you say is for curiosity to be deep, it has to be in the service of strengthening relationships and changing our lives in a meaningful way. And I wrote this quote down. You say, quote, When we use curiosity as a practice of connection, instead of only as an intellectual exercise, the goal isn't to know, but rather to understand.

[00:09:50] **Scott Shigeoka:** yes.

[00:09:51] **Jill Stoddard:** I loved that! I thought that was so great, and I'm actually jumping way ahead in the questions that I had planned, but since we're here... Would you be [00:10:00] willing to share some of your experiences with Deep Curiosity? So you talk in the book about being a liberal, gay, Asian man. You attended Trump rallies in like middle America.

You've interacted with Christians in fact, you were invited to go to a Christian church and it was so compelling to read about this in the book and I think a lot

of people would find curiosity quite intimidating when we're talking about the other.

And so I'm wondering if you could just talk a little bit about your motivation for doing that and how curiosity really changed these experiences

[00:10:41] **Scott Shigeoka:** Yeah, absolutely. Well, like I said, deep curiosity is really about helping people to feel like they matter. I mean, if you're listening in, think about a time when someone was curious towards you, right? It really made you feel seen and heard and valued as a person. You know, when people ask you questions, and they're genuinely interested in you, and they want to get to know [00:11:00] you on a really deep level, and you can just feel that sense of connection, right?

Mm hmm. But then if you think about a moment when someone was incurious towards you, you know, they were turning away from you, they were sort of dismissive, why are you voting for that person, not even paying attention to you, ignoring you, maybe even, I mean, that doesn't make you feel like you matter.

It does not make you feel seen. It does not make you feel heard. In fact, it can push you away, it can make you feel closed off or defensive or isolated. And those aren't great feelings to be when we crave at the human level connection and a sense of belonging. So, I think today when I look around the world that we're living in right now, and even back in 2016, when I really started this journey with curiosity after the presidential elections, you know, I think for most of us, we just felt the deep sense of division and hate, whether it was in our family, at reunions, at the dinner table, or whether it's at work, all this tension and conflict that shows up in different ways.

Or when you flip on the news or you watch our [00:12:00] Congress or protests clashing into violence. It's just, it feels so helpless and it feels like despair. At least it did for me. And I think it does for many people that I interviewed as well. And so my quest with curiosity and deep curiosity was, is there a way?

Is there a way that we can heal? Is there a way that we can come back together and actually solve some of the big problems that are affecting all of us? And that's why I went out on this journey. I wanted to show to myself that is this possible with deep curiosity? Could I go to a Trump rally and meet people who have very different political views from me?

Could I go to an organization that is crafting anti LGBTQ policy or legislation? What would it look like if we started? From a place of honoring each other's

humanity, coming from a place of truly just wanting to listen and understand one another. Could that help us to, you know, see each other in a different way and what would that mean for, for us in the society we live in?

So that, that was a journey and yeah, [00:13:00] there's so many interesting stories that, you know, I, I put in the book that, you know, some of it is really great stories. A lot, some of it is, this is exhausting work, but I think it's worthwhile work. Absolutely.

[00:13:11] **Jill Stoddard:** Yeah. And it, and it really did, I think, reduce a lot of your, own assumptions and biases. And we'll talk about that later and talk about what gets in the way. But, these stories were really powerful and, and you make it a point to say talking to people with these differences didn't change your mind.

It didn't change your politics or anything like that, but it did change the way you saw these people. And it did sort of narrow that divide between you. And it made me think of, we have an episode coming up with Dr. Janina Scarlett, who wrote a book about loneliness. And what's funny is it's called unseen, unheard, undervalued.

And those are the three words, you know, it's being seen, being heard, being valued that you're using. And so it really struck me as like, Oh my gosh, the other thing you're saying is. You know, the surgeon [00:14:00] general has come out with a report that loneliness has become an epidemic. And it was like this aha moment I had that since 2016 and with the political divide and all the things that are happening that these two things must be related to each other, that this must be at least where some of this loneliness epidemic is coming from. And that by cultivating this kind of deep curious, maybe this is one of the ways to curing that global loneliness

[00:14:28] **Scott Shigeoka:** Well, yeah, I think that's such an interesting insight. I think, you know, I think about the times like when folks feel really lonely. You know, you come home from a really hard day, of, grief or heartache. And you see your romantic partner there sitting on the couch. Maybe they're like, Plugging away on their phone, you know, and you want to have a conversation with them.

You want to sort of share what's going on. Um, You know, you're offering your bids for their attention, but, maybe they're turning away from you, you know, and maybe they're not acknowledging you when you walk through that door,

[00:15:00] maybe they're not sensing or seeing um, what, the look that you have on your face when you're asking, Hey, can we talk?

Maybe they're turning away from that and for whatever reasons they might be, doing those behaviors it can create a sense of loneliness, right? It can create, it makes you feel lonely and, you know, loneliness, I think is important to understand in that it's not just that there aren't people around.

Sometimes you can feel lonely with people around you, you know? And a big part of that as, you're pointing out is when people are in curious, right? When people don't, you know, turn towards you and actually acknowledge you and ask you questions and sit with you and be present with you and listen to you, you know, it can create that sense of loneliness.

And I think. When you look at society at large, right? Like we're, we're not doing that just to our romantic partners who are the very people that maybe we should be like turning to the most, right? We're, we're, we're especially doing that towards people who feel very different from us because we dehumanize them.

We think that there's nothing that we can relate to them on. There's no [00:16:00] common humanity and it's easier for us when we put them in this category as the other to then. dismiss them and say, I don't need to talk to them. I don't need to watch that. They're whatever they're watching. I don't believe in them.

Never going to like interact with them. I'm blocking them on my Instagram, on my Facebook. I'm not going to that family reunion because so and so is going to be there. Right. And then we start to cancel people based on the identities that they have or the perspectives they have. When what we know from the research is In order for us to actually come together and understand one another and move towards, you know, justice and belonging and love, we actually need to have what's called intergroup contact.

We need to come together across our differences in ways that are positive and conducive where we're hearing one another and understanding each other in a deeper way. And so curiosity offers a pathway for that, right? For both those you're very close to, whether it's a romantic partner, or those that feel so different from you um, who you feel like you can never connect with.[00:17:00]

And so that is a hope for this book, is that you can apply deep curiosity in really any setting that you walk into.



[00:17:07] **Jill Stoddard:** Yeah, absolutely. it may be one of those things where it makes sense to start with you know, like, if you decide you want to climb Mount Everest, you're going to do some training before you go all the way to the top, right? So maybe you don't start your curiosity journey by going to a Trump rally like you did after many years of studying.

Studying this

[00:17:26] **Scott Shigeoka:** yeah, sure, yeah,

[00:17:28] **Jill Stoddard:** you do start just by taking your face out of your phone and getting more curious with your partner or your kids or your friends and, you know,

[00:17:34] **Scott Shigeoka:** Or yourself, you know? Yeah.

[00:17:36] **Jill Stoddard:** or yourself or yourself, well, actually, let's talk about that because you talk about how there are three directions of curiosity.

And so there's the internal, the external and the beyond. So can you talk about what, what each of those are and like why they're important and how they interact?

[00:17:52] **Scott Shigeoka:** Yeah. And then I want to go back to what you were just saying about curiosity being a muscle, really, which I think is really brilliant. And so, so there's three directions of curiosity I read [00:18:00] about in Seek. The first is inward. So, How do we get curious about ourself? This, you know, for those of you who are in therapy, for instance, your, your therapist is probably guiding you through questions around your values, your past experiences, your emotional states um, you know, what you want, what you need in your relationships, in your life, in your career, et cetera.

That is all inward curiosity. Outward curiosity is about getting getting interested and curious about those around you. So those might be, you know, your magic partners, your colleagues, strangers um, neighbors, but it's also about the systems or the cultures or the places that we live and getting curious about that.

That's typically how we tend to think about curiosity is outward curiosity. Then there's the beyond, which is how do we get curious about things that are outside of the physical realm. So for those of us who are religious, that might be the divine or God. Um, For others it might be consciousness or ancestors, or, you know, those seven generations from now.

Right? So, there are those three directions that all offer us [00:19:00] something really powerful. You know, in terms of connection and transformation. In the book, I have these sections that are like, out of curiosity, they're kind of like a way to pause and reflect on your learning and also on your own life.

And after I talk about the directions, I have this moment where I say, so which directions are you really leaning into in your life and which ones do you want to step into more? And for me, I, acknowledge in the book that I'm, I've always been sort of an outwardly curious person.

And it was a strategy for me to disassociate. It was a way for me to not have to confront or look at the things that were going on inside of myself from my past. That was too scary and confronting for me to do um, but fortunately, like you said, curiosity is a muscle, right? So the more and more that I practice it, by being curious about others, It gave me that, that courage and that competency to then go inward and to be able to do that more successfully. Just like, doing that with others allowed me, you know, who I know and who I trust and who, you know, have similar values and perspectives [00:20:00] in me doing that over and over and over again.

Allowed me to go to a Trump rally eventually, you know, to someone who has a very different view from me. Because curiosity is a muscle. You wouldn't go to a gym and like immediately start bench pressing like 250 pounds, you know what I mean? That could injure you literally, it could injure you, or it could injure the person you're with, like that spotter or the people around you.

So you want to start from a place that feels safe to you and where you can grow into this practice. Cause it's really something you have to work on every day.

[00:20:28] **Jill Stoddard:** Yeah, definitely. Well, I loved those bubbles. The out of curiosity bubbles, because they really did, you know, I wanted to get curious about my own curiosity journey, and they helped me to get curious. And I had this sort of aha moment when I was thinking about the beyond curiosity, because my first reaction was, Oh, I think that's an area where I, don't tend to be curious.

And if I'm being honest, and we'll talk about some of the obstacles in a minute, but I get a little bit nervous when it comes to things I don't understand. So, you know, my husband teases me so much because, and I don't know if this is technically [00:21:00] beyond, but. Like I don't like anything related to time travel and the space time continuum and quantum physics because it feels so out of the realm of like possibility and

[00:21:09] **Scott Shigeoka:** Mm. Mm.

[00:21:10] **Jill Stoddard:** just very intimidating and I don't, I don't like it.

but what I realized is um, When I was in my master's degree program, I was going to this like cognitive behavioral therapy seminar with doctoral students. And the teacher was not there one day. And I walked into the room and this random woman, who I didn't know who she was, was standing there. And I had this overwhelming experience that this person was going to change my life. Ignored

[00:21:38] **Scott Shigeoka:** it about? Was there like a physical sensation? Or how did you, what was, yeah.

[00:21:42] **Jill Stoddard:** The way I've described it in the past is what I imagine people feel like when they experience love at first sight, except it had nothing to do with love. It was just this other worldly sort of spiritual experience. To be honest, it did kind of scare me a little because it had this woo woo like.

Like, I felt self conscious that I was being silly. [00:22:00] But she went on to lecture about three things that I was interested in that I had never seen lectured about before together. And I let myself get curious about this whole experience. And so even though I felt silly and weird and intimidated and whatever, I went and met with this woman and long story short, she was the person who recommended I apply to the doctoral program I ended up going to, and I

[00:22:27] **Scott Shigeoka:** like that. That's beautiful. Yeah.

[00:22:29] **Jill Stoddard:** And if I had been incurious in that moment, if I had shut that down because it felt weird and silly, it literally could have changed my entire path

[00:22:37] **Scott Shigeoka:** Totally. Totally. And how many times are we getting curious? You know, maybe we see someone that comes in front of us to lecture a class and we're like, Oh, we're not going to learn anything from this. I know where this is going, you know, and we shut ourselves off maybe from an opportunity that could literally change the trajectory of our entire life.

And also that shows your curiosity to actually. really listen to your intuition, to your gut, to [00:23:00] whatever was inside of you saying, this is important. This moment matters, you know, pay attention. So, you know, you had to have

that curiosity and that attention to yourself. To, you know, really soak that in too.

So I think that's such a great story, I love that.

[00:23:15] **Jill Stoddard:** And it was a long time ago, and I never really connected it to this, like, role of of Curiosity. And so there were a lot of moments like that through the book that were just these little light bulbs of like, Oh, right. These are the different ways that curiosity is like playing such a huge and important role in my life and other people's lives.

But I also had another question. So I think this was really early on.

[00:23:37] **Scott Shigeoka:** hmm. Mm

[00:23:37] **Jill Stoddard:** Where you talk in the beginning about how we're born curious. This is not something that's learned. This is something that we are like evolutionarily programmed to have that. It's critical to survival. But there was somewhere in there in these out of curiosity sidebars.

So it was one of the first times where we're asked to just kind of like, remember some of the first times we remember being curious, And [00:24:00] two things popped into my head.

One was snooping when I used to like snoop in my, my parents drawers. And then of course would immediately regret it. And the other was when I was in kindergarten and I ventured outside and there was this big divot in the field that we knew we weren't supposed to go to, mostly because if it filled with water and it was winter, it would be frozen and it would be dangerous.

And I went out there and I looked at it anyway. And so these were two examples of curiosity. They were the first ones that occurred to me when I read the little out of curiosity sidebar and I thought, but this is an example of curiosity killing the cat because I always regretted snooping and I got in trouble.

It was the first. And last time I was ever sent to the principal's office. And you don't talk in the book about any downsides of curiosity, but I was just curious about your thoughts of this curiosity killed the cat sort of notion. And whether you think that there's any kind of downside, or if we are just giving curiosity a bad name or something when we, when we use that, that phrase.

[00:24:58] **Scott Shigeoka:** Yeah, absolutely. Well, for [00:25:00] folks who are interested in the sort of origin of Curiosity Kills the Cat and how, where it comes from Shakespeare, it's actually really fascinating and it's sort of been misconstrued in current, language. And so essentially I think it was Care Killed the Cat was basically the way that it was initially used in 1598 in Ben Johnson's City Comedy, Every Man and His Humor, and then That was then used in Shakespeare when he wrote Much Ado About Nothing, and he says, What courage, man, what though care killed a cat, thou hast mettle enough in thee to kill care.

Care here meaning worry or sorrow as it did in Shakespeare's time. So the definition really was like different in that sort of context of time than it is today. And, now it's taken on this new meaning around curiosity killed the cat, not this like worry killed the cat, you know, and what's interesting about this. So initially if Shakespeare was trying to say, you know, worrying is what killed the cat, you know, and, sort of, I think I remember reading about how, you know, if the [00:26:00] cat doesn't like pounds when it needs to seize the opportunity, then I might miss it and I might go hungry and I might kill the cat.

Um, So this, worrying can actually be something that's negative for us. Although I think worrying and anxiety can be a superpower too.

[00:26:12] **Jill Stoddard:** And also evolutionarily programmed in

[00:26:14] **Scott Shigeoka:** yeah, yeah, yeah,

[00:26:15] **Jill Stoddard:** like Curiosity,

[00:26:17] **Scott Shigeoka:** yeah, yeah. Yeah. I think, just generally though it's interesting. When I talked to trauma informed therapists for the book trauma is definitely a big blocker for curiosity.

It definitely gets in the way of folks being open. You know, you go through COVID. COVID was a huge trauma for many people. Many people lost loved ones. It was very socially isolating. It was hard to get access to public things that we needed. Like, groceries or, you know, health care. So, these traumas that we experience in our life, the interpersonal, traumas that we experienced into our lives can close us off from curiosity.

But paradoxically, Kevin Becker, who's one of these therapists I interviewed says that curiosity is the barometer of healing. So when you start to get curious and you start to explore the things. that have harmed you, that [00:27:00] is

when you actually start the process of healing. Right. And so, you know, you, you know, in many ways, maybe the new saying, I read this out loud as a comment when I just did a seminar, you know you know, a couple of hours ago, which was maybe curiosity healed the cat, you know, it didn't kill the cat.

It like healed the cat, you know, like it was a thing that sort of undo and undid that. But the same is true for anxiety and fear too. You know, when, when we feel anxious about something, let's say, you know, end of life anxiety, we fear our death. That's like a very valid thing to fear. It's very scary.

It's very unknown. It's very uncertain. You know um, palliative care physicians and end of life dealers will say that curiosity about death and about the life that they've lived is really helpful to minimize some of that end of life anxiety. So when you explore questions like, what is the life I lived?

Who are the people that are meaningful for me? How do I want to die with dignity? What will that be like? Um, Or feel like, you know, those kinds of questions can actually reduce anxiety because you're actually confronting it, exploring it, and getting curious about it. So it's such an interesting paradox, you know, we Get [00:28:00] fearful about things, but getting curious about the things we fear can actually reduce it.

We get hurt by things, but getting curious about the things that hurt us can actually help us heal.

[00:28:08] **Jill Stoddard:** Well, and there's there's a saying for so many of these things and, this evolutionary adaptation :of, curious people learned things and figured things out and reduced uncertainty when uncertainty could be deadly. But then there's also the, adage, be careful what you wish for, or, you know, sometimes finding what's around the corner can be dangerous and maybe, it's that parabola relationship where like too much or too little of many things is not ideal, but that there are these sort of optimal amounts of this that are somewhere in that moderate range.

Like not too much, not too little, but this sort of like moderate amount that maybe is, optimal for surviving or for thriving or flourishing.

[00:28:49] **Scott Shigeoka:** Yeah. I mean, definitely, like, you know, we are all born with curiosity, thanks to our ancestors who had in the group, you know, someone who is curious to search for water and food, you know, on the other side of that mountain, or to try that [00:29:00] barrier, that mushroom for subsidence, or to track that, you know, animal, or to Um, learn, you know, to

communicate with one another, to build tools, you know, that, that's all really crucial.

And we know from the research that, you know, infants look at novel stimuli for longer than known stimuli. So it's not something that's necessarily taught to us. And that it's something that's literally encoded into our, reward motivation or it's literally re encoded into our brain.

Um, It essentially releases dopamine when we are. It doesn't, it essentially does release dopamine when we are curious um, which is the happy hormone. So the same thing that happens when we have sex or we eat really sweet food, right? Like that happens when we are curious as well. We release this happy hormone dopamine.

So, you know, I think that That's really important to understand. It is something that we're born with. Um, But just like we're born with any sort of ability, the ability to have sex, the ability to, you know, drink, you know, alcohol, the ability to be curious. Yeah, there's certain levels that you want to, think about for your own self, and for others, you know, where is the line where it [00:30:00] becomes harmful um, or becomes invasive, right?

As an employer, there are certain, questions you cannot ask in an interview. There are certain curiosities that, I'm sorry, it is at the very least a microaggression or at worst an equity to, you know, try to be curious about certain groups of people or certain individuals and the lives they live outside of work.

And so that's why I wrote an entire chapter in the book on the limits and the boundaries of curiosity. I mean, you have to acknowledge that curiosity has limits and that it requires us to know our own boundaries and to know the boundaries of others on where we can go with our curiosity.

[00:30:39] **Jill Stoddard:** Yeah. So it's a both and thing. It is, adaptive and wonderful and has limits. Like when my, my son got curious, he's only nine. He was curious about how fast my new car could go. And, and that is a question we're not going to try to answer,

[00:30:54] **Scott Shigeoka:** Yeah. Yeah.

[00:30:55] **Jill Stoddard:** right? Like that's where we want to maybe put a limit on

[00:30:58] **Scott Shigeoka:** Yeah, yeah, maybe experientially, at least, you  
[00:31:00] know, definitely not going

to push on that.

[00:31:01] **Jill Stoddard:** Yeah. Yeah. We could look it up.

[00:31:02] **Scott Shigeoka:** yeah, yeah,

[00:31:04] **Jill Stoddard:** to take it down the freeway to see how fast it goes.

[00:31:07] **Scott Shigeoka:** That's what VR is for, right?

[00:31:10] **Jill Stoddard:** yeah.

[00:31:10] **Scott Shigeoka:** But on that VR headset, you know, experience that.

[00:31:14] **Jill Stoddard:** So you had mentioned a minute ago that trauma is one of the things that can be an obstacle to deep curiosity. And you identify, you call these speed bumps. You identify three other speed bumps that are fear, trauma, time, and distance. So why don't you talk a little bit about these four obstacles, what gets in the way of us getting curious in terms of these four speed bumps?

[00:31:36] **Scott Shigeoka:** And I call them speed bumps just because it's something that we should be aware of and we should, you know, be a little cautious and slow down a bit with our curiosity. Um, You know, when we see it in front of us, right. And so fear, you know, is something that I think holds us all back in different ways, but definitely with our curiosity, if we're, you know, if we are in a hard relationship with a friend or with a partner or with our  
[00:32:00] child, you know, sometimes, you know, we want to get the answer is we want to learn more and understand the person that we're in this relationship with, but it can be scary to ask those questions because I don't know what I'm going to find out. I might find out the thing that I'm most afraid of um, and what is that going to mean for me, for us, for our relationship.

So that can definitely get in the way of curiosity. We talked about trauma you know, and how that can really be a speed bump as well. And then the other two are, are time and um, well, so let me talk about time. So time, this is the idea that, we, All based on different levels of privilege, have different levels of time.



And so, you know, we have obligations that we have in our life. We are caring for our children, our aging parents, we have jobs, we have social lives. We're trying to like, you know, keep our health up, both mentally and physically. So there's all these demands to our time already. So a lot of folks are, where do I find that time, to be curious, you know.

When I'm so strapped already um, and then distance is the last one, which is really about, [00:33:00] you know, we used to have these public squares where we could, you know, meet with people who are very different from us. You know, we, we would go to um, events or the libraries or have these, you know um the YMCA is, or the different meeting spaces where different groups of people come together and, you know, religious spaces like church, etc.

But now these spaces are being less and less access, especially by young people, Gen Z and millennials. And so where do we encounter people who are different from us? You know, age wise, we're all segregated. We have many older adults are in retirement communities or in certain parts of our communities.

Younger people are in, daycares or, you know, in, schools, we have older adults, you know, working in offices. So you just, you, you have age segregation, you have racial segregation, you have all of these forms of segregation that creates distance between people who are different from us, who we can learn from.

so those are all the speed bumps. And, in that chapter, I also talk about how do you move through those speed bumps in a way that's cautious and [00:34:00] careful um, so that you can use deep curiosity, but also protect yourself and, make sure that you're doing this in a way

[00:34:06] **Jill Stoddard:** too fast over

[00:34:06] **Scott Shigeoka:** Yeah.

You don't want to fly over the speed, but I mean, that, that could be. Uh, You know, maybe exhilarating for some, but very terrifying and potentially consequential. So um, you know, so for trauma, for instance, it's really helpful to have someone who is, you know, professionally suited and is trauma informed and can support you on that journey of, Um, being inwardly curious and learning about where your pain and your suffering is coming from and, you know, identifying coping strategies that work for you in that moment in time.

Um, You know, for time, you can find ways of being curious about where your time is going and how that's aligned to your values or what you actually really

want. Um, Who are the people that you could lean on with more at work? Are there certain patterns that you have inside of yourself that are feeling like you have to do everything on your own, right?

And, and how do you start to detach from that? So there, there's, um, sort of a sprinkle of different solutions or suggestions in there, but [00:35:00] really everyone's going to arrive at their own conclusion. I think the big part of that chapter is just, Hey, these speed bumps are here. Acknowledge that before you go on the journey of deep curiosity.

[00:35:08] **Jill Stoddard:** Yeah. And I imagine you know, one of the things that I was thinking about, I guess it's really specific to fear is we talk a lot on the podcast about acceptance and commitment therapy and the importance of holding outcomes lightly and the importance of making values driven decisions. And so if being curious a deeply held personal value, can you be willing to engage in a curious way, even in the presence of fear and you, you don't have any control over how another person will react or how uh, you know, an interpersonal interaction will go and it might go great. And you may end up developing a really deep connection or it might completely fall apart because they're just not in that same place where they're willing to engage with deep curiosity and vulnerability. But if it is a [00:36:00] value of yours to be curious, can you hold that outcome lightly and take those steps to be willing to move in that direction? Even though you don't get to control like ultimately how it

[00:36:12] **Scott Shigeoka:** I mean, I,

[00:36:13] **Jill Stoddard:** you you don't necessarily have to wait until you don't feel afraid to move forward

[00:36:16] **Scott Shigeoka:** exactly. Like, know that that's a normal part of the process, right? And um, I mean, and I think, you know, what you're also speaking to is this idea that, you know, of what I call in, in Seek, you know, predatory curiosity, this idea that it looks like curiosity, But it's not, because there's an agenda, there's a desired outcome, there's a motive that's sort of pushing that curiosity forward.

It's maybe what a detective does, right? They're asking questions, they're being very open minded, they look curious, you know, on, you know, an externalized view into what's happening. But there's an agenda .There's something underneath that they're trying to figure out or look for. That is not true curiosity, right?

True curiosity is truly open hearted. open minded. You do not know what the outcome is. You do not know what [00:37:00] you're going to find out or hear. And it's really a search for understanding that person you're being curious with. Whether it's yourself or that other person that you're being curious with. That is true curiosity.

You have to be totally open hearted. Let go of the agenda. Let go of the motives. And that includes, you know, when your partner walks through the door and you're, you're asking them questions because you want them to ask you a question. That is still a motive. That is still an outcome. You know, the goal is you're just here to be curious about that person that's in front of you. And what's nice about that and reassuring is that the research also says that curiosity is contagious. So what that means is that when you're modeling curiosity, you're doing it at the dinner table, at that family reunion, you're doing it to your partner when they walk through the door, you're doing it to your kids, your boss, whoever it is, it is more likely that they are going to extend curiosity back towards you, you know, because mirror neurons, the chameleon effect.

We, we model our behaviors and it's infectious in that way. It's, it's contagious um, but it doesn't always happen, right? And that's [00:38:00] why, again, boundaries are so important. You might realize you're in a relationship where you're extending all of this curiosity, all this energy, and you're getting harmed in the process over and over again.

And it is okay to go no contact and to set a boundary that allows you to protect yourself and your loved ones and your wellbeing. And I talk about a story of a mother and daughter relationship where that exactly happened. And so that's really difficult, but that's so important to do.

[00:38:25] **Jill Stoddard:** Yeah, absolutely. And one of the really important things you present in the book is a model for how to cultivate deep curiosity.

So I thought we could talk a little bit about this. And so this is the D. I. V. E. model and D. I. V. E. is an acronym that stands for Detaching, Intending, Valuing, and Embracing. So let's dive into it. So first for D. I. V. E. Detach. Ha! So

[00:38:50] **Scott Shigeoka:** Yeah,

[00:38:52] **Jill Stoddard:** talk to us about what it is that we need to detach from in order to cultivate deep curiosity.

[00:38:58] **Scott Shigeoka:** Yeah. And I, and I [00:39:00] do agree, and you know, I think it is the heartbeat of the book really the dive model, the four core muscles for deep curiosity. Um, So yeah, it starts with d detach and detaching is really this idea of letting go of our ABCs, our assumptions. our biases, and uncertainty. So this is the idea that we live in this culture where knowingness and having the answers is sort of what's revered, but actually there's this beauty and importance of living and loving the questions as well, of creating a culture where we also say, I don't know when we don't know things, you know, and that we explore and learn what true answers are.

Um, You know, there's interesting research when in doubt, shout is the name of the the white paper. It's that when we have, the most doubt about our ideas, that is when we can sometimes argue for them the most. And it's interesting that, that is sort of a product of our culture today. You look at the field of work, for instance, who tends to get promoted um, or, or the, the idea of who tends to get promoted are those who speak the loudest, speak the [00:40:00] most.

Um, Those are the ones that are emerging in small groups as leaders oftentimes, but that's not necessarily what's good for business. And that's not necessarily what's good for the culture or the people around them because people show up in all kinds of ways. We can um, you know, some people are extroverts introverts.

there's a power in asking questions. Curiosity in the field of work can actually increase creativity. It can increase. innovation. It can help with productivity. It can help us to solve problems, reduce anxiety, support conflict, which emerges in the workplace now more than ever. So, you know, we know from the research as well, that curious people who use intellect, who have intellectual humility and detach from knowing all the answers and sometimes say, I don't know.

and want to learn what the answers are for the questions that are being asked by their teams or by the fields that they're working in. They tend to be more light as leaders. They're more likable and they're rarely seen as more uh, less competent. So, you know, because that's always the fear is like, if I say, I don't know, or if I'm getting curious, people will think that I don't know what I'm doing, but the [00:41:00] research says the exact opposite actually.

So. Yeah, so I think that, you know, detaching is so, so important. We have to, you know, I call it in the book, we have to become an admitter. We have to, you know, remember the phrases of, you know, tell me more. I don't know, I'm not sure, you know, like the, these are the kinds of three word phrases that actually, you know, help us to build ownership over, you know, the problems we're

solving in a team, extend, other people to answer and, and, and also, you know, give their own voice and their own perspectives. And it shows your intellectual humility. And that's inspiring for others to also continue to search for answers when they're stuck on problems or they need to, you know, search for, for, for information.

So, so that's what detaching is all about. It's about emptying that teacup, I guess, that sometimes we fill up, you know, so full to the top with our assumptions and our expectations and, our outcomes that we desire. And it's like letting a little bit of that go so that we can open ourselves up to the people and the experiences that are around us.

Yeah.

[00:41:59] **Jill Stoddard:** [00:42:00] I was thinking about the ways in which the assumptions and the biases may be related to that speed bump of fear in so far as, as long as we think we know everything about another person.

You know, I assume that the reason you didn't say hello to me is because you don't like me, or you're mad at me, or I think I know everything there is to know about this jerky boss or that particular type of voter. It's protective, right? It, like, makes us feel less vulnerable. We, like, put on this suit of armor.

And so that we don't have to confront fear, feelings of vulnerability and that that may be part of what makes it difficult to detach and to cultivate. Curiosity. Do you think do you think that's

[00:42:43] **Scott Shigeoka:** absolutely. Yeah. And that, and yeah, absolutely. And that gets in the way of our ability to connect with people and for them to then in turn feel seen, heard, and valued, right? You know, I think that's so important when we have those assumptions about other people, based on, you know, an [00:43:00] interaction that, you know, one interaction we've had with them or.

You know, the way that they voted in the last election, and that tells us everything we need to know about them. You're right. We're not going to get curious about them. We're not going to connect with them. We're not going to see the value for us to, you know, go deeper with them. And then that creates more of that distance.

It creates animosity and conflict, potentially. Um, And it can even create more fear, right? I mean, it can, you know, the less I know about you, the more that,

you know, I don't see your humanity. I don't understand you. I'm... Fearful of you. I mean, I think that's happening, you know, in the way that Democrats see, you know, Republicans sometimes it's the way that anti LGBTQ people see queer and trans folks, like, you know, it's just, you know, we have to really, you know, close those gaps or else we're going to be operating from stereotypes and caricatures and assumptions that's going to get us nowhere where it's going to get us is towards hate and towards division and

[00:43:56] **Jill Stoddard:** right.

[00:43:56] **Scott Shigeoka:** you know, othering.

Yeah, exactly. Exactly. So yeah, I think

[00:43:59] **Jill Stoddard:** and [00:44:00] one of the strategy. Yeah, and one of the strategies that you give, I love this, there, I have to say there were a number of times throughout this book where I was laughing out loud, that I just like, I really appreciated your writing style, and it's, all science filled and fascinating, but it's also funny, and I can hear your voice coming through, and, you know, like, I felt like I knew you by the end of the book, and it's just a joy to read, and you give a number of strategies that people can use to cultivate this Curiosity.

And one of the things you say is back that ass up. And ass is a sum is short for assumption. And so really it's about getting data and finding facts and not just assuming you think you know the truth about what someone else is thinking or feeling and, and really kind of finding out. And there are other strategies.

We will not have time to get to all of those, but I really recommend people pick up the book for that. But let's talk a little bit about some of the other aspects of the dive model. So the next, the I is for intend, which you [00:45:00] say means to be deliberate in our practice of deep curiosity. And I love how you point out that the root of the word intent means to stretch toward, which I love because it really focuses on intention as a process, not as a goal or an endpoint. And so you give a few strategies for how we can cultivate intention, but I especially liked your suggestion to create a powerful questions list.

So could you give us a few tips on what sets a weak question apart from a more powerful question? Right.

[00:45:33] **Scott Shigeoka:** think uh, well, so first of all, a, a powerful question usually has four attributes to it. Uh, One is that it's open ended. So if you ask a

question and, you know, someone can give a one word response or a yes or a no. that's not necessarily going to be a powerful question.

Um, Two is that it needs to be um, genuine. So you shouldn't ask a question that you're, you don't really care about or that you're not actually genuinely interested in the person and knowing about them, like that will really be [00:46:00] felt um, by the person that you're trying to be curious with, Whatever interests you have needs to come from a genuine place. So if maybe a colleague comes back from, you know, traveling to France, you know, maybe you're really a foodie. So you might ask, you know, what were some of your favorite meals in France? And, you know, like, what did you eat? Like, come on, like, share me the dibs.

You have photos. Like, I want to hear that. And that sort of genuineness will really come through. The third is um, to make it appropriate for the relationship. So, you know, I talked about that spectrum from shallow to deep curiosity. Um, If you went to a conference and you started with the deep curiosity, that's the first thing that you said to someone.

You're like, tell me your deepest childhood trauma. Like, I would love to learn about that. You know, my name is Scott. What's your name? You know, like, that's like, kind of can be confronting for people. I mean, I personally might be down with that. You know, like, I might be, you know, I could drop in there. That, that seems interesting.

It's like, ooh, you know, let's cut the small talk out. Let's go deep. But some people might be like, Why do you, why am I gonna tell you that? Like, I don't know. You know what I mean? Like, that's not an appropriate question for that [00:47:00] relationship. You really have to build the trust, build the relationship, and earn that um, curiosity, and make sure that it's consented to, right?

So, so that's the third attribute. And then the fourth uh, you know, attribute is that the question is original, or it's creative, or it's fresh, so it's this idea that, We hear so many of the same questions all the time and that can get boring, you're at a cocktail party and someone's like, what do you do for your job?

You know, what do you do for work? A deeper way of asking that question might be, you know, what, like, what's bringing you joy right now in your life? Like, tell me what makes you come alive. Like, how do you, when do I know that you're flourishing? Like, can you tell me more about that? That might give you insight into how people like to spend their days.

It might get you into what they're actually truly passionate about. Maybe that is their work and what they're doing day to day, but it's an interesting gateway into that question because it's original. So you have original, you have open ended questions, you have appropriate for the relationship, and it's genuine.

So, you know, the other piece is that we don't write down our questions. We might write down our answers a lot, you know, from our explorations.

[00:48:00] But, you know, I tell people when you hear a really interesting question, you know, maybe you're at a conference, maybe you're at a dinner party, you know, cocktail hour, whatever, your kid asks you a really interesting question, write it down, you know, and formulate a list on, you know, your Memos, you know, app on your, on your phone, or maybe you have like a spot in your journal or something um, where you can actually write down all of these questions, because again, going back to intend the ability to set the mindset and the setting for curiosity, if you don't have questions written, you know, down, and you don't know what questions you're going to ask someone before you get into a conversation, you might get stuck in the conversation and be like, I don't really know where to take it from here.

Like, I'm not sure what else to ask. Like, I don't have anything else to say.

Right. Okay. So it gives you that sort of preparation um, support to, you know, move the conversation forward and get to really interesting places. You know, you do this as a podcast host, journalists do this, you know, coaches do this, you know um, a lot of people don't prepare though, when they go into conversations that really require curiosity.[00:49:00]

And so, you know, that's what I often, you know, tell them is, okay, you're about to enter into this work conversation with your team and you're in high conflict. What are the questions you're asking? They're like, Oh, I should probably write that down. Yeah, that's a good

[00:49:13] **Jill Stoddard:** Yeah, I love that. I think it's a great idea. And there were a lot of great examples in the book. I had a friend whose book came out a couple of weeks before mine, Michelle Drapkin. She wrote a book on motivational interviewing and she was texting me, what was your rose bud and thorn of your book launch?

So like one thing that was great, the thorn is one thing that wasn't so great. And the bud is something that you look forward to. And that might just, be like, Less deep curiosity, but it felt like a great launching pad. And so then I started asking my kids that question and then it just kind of created this context to have like a more curious conversation rather than just, how's your day?



Good.

[00:49:49] **Scott Shigeoka:** Yep.

Yep.

[00:49:50] **Jill Stoddard:** I loved that. Well, Scott, I know that you have a hard stop in a couple minutes. So we did, of course did not get to all the other things. So. The rest of the dive model, the V for value, I think [00:50:00] is really important. It's really seeing the dignity in every human. The final one is embrace. You share a quicksand metaphor that's similar to a metaphor that we use in act for that, that I really loved.

Um, But I know we have to wrap up, so we're leaving on a cliffhanger. People will just have to buy Seek

[00:50:17] **Scott Shigeoka:** Hopefully it gets them even more curious. A little tease. They're like, Oh, I want to know about those practices. Yeah.

[00:50:23] **Jill Stoddard:** That's right. Exactly. And, I gotta say um, I think that you had the best last line of any book. So if you remember, the book is called Seek.

And at the end of the book, Scott's talking about how life will always throw us around. Curveballs, and that we can't control them, but that we can use deep curiosity to better navigate them. And your very last line of the book is, quote, the next time the rug is pulled from under you, don't hide. Instead, I ask you to seek. And I thought it was just like the perfect way to, to end the book. And I love the title. I'm always very jealous [00:51:00] of good book titles. I feel like I'm terrible at coming up with book titles. I was like, Oh, seek is the greatest title for a book about curiosity. It's So wonderful. So thank you so much for being here.

I loved the book. I love being publisher buddies, and I'm so glad that we were able to connect. And I wish you all the best with your launch.

[00:51:18] **Scott Shigeoka:** thanks so much. I really appreciate it. This is such a fun conversation. Thanks.

[00:51:30] **Jill Stoddard:** Thank you for listening to Psychologists Off the Clock. If you enjoy our podcast, you can help us out by leaving a review or contributing on Patreon.

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