

9 TIPS FOR FOSTERING CURIOSITY THROUGH STORYTELLING

\$50M A 2023 study found that movies incorporating character strengths in stories generated on average \$50 million more globally compared to those that did not.

DID YOU KNOW? Curiosity is the desire or willingness to learn and discover new things, whether it's a new environment or topic, understanding others, or self-reflection.

Extended adolescence, which includes ages 10-24, is a critical period of development when young people gain independence and form their values.

ADOLESCENCE AND CURIOSITY

1 Show adolescents approaching their feelings with curiosity and self-compassion.



Why? When teenagers approach their feelings with curiosity and self-compassion, asking questions like "Why am I feeling this way?" and "What might make me feel better?" instead of judging themselves and thinking, "I shouldn't feel this way," their mental health can improve.

DID YOU KNOW? A 2023 survey found that 87% of Gen Z participants regularly experience mental health challenges.

Research insight: In a 2018 study of 1,057 adolescents, youth who practiced self-compassion were more open to positive risks, embraced new situations, and felt more motivated to learn new skills.

2 Show teens expressing their curiosity through positive risk-taking.



Why? Curiosity fuels risk-taking. When teens are encouraged to take healthy risks in a supportive environment, their mental well-being flourishes.

DID YOU KNOW? Positive risk-taking means taking constructive and intentional risks, such as trying new things. For instance, running for student body president can help teens channel their emotions into creating actionable change.

Research insight: Dopamine, the brain's reward chemical, is linked to curiosity. When someone explores and satisfies their curiosity, their brain floods the body with dopamine, which makes them feel happier.

3 Show adults supporting adolescents' curiosity by encouraging exploration, play, and self-driven learning.



Why? When adolescents are encouraged to explore interests outside of formal learning structures, their curiosity is ignited.

Research insight: A 2021 report by the LEGO Foundation found that play helps children learn language and literacy, math, and social-emotional skills.

CONNECTING CURIOSITY TO GENDER, RACE, AND DISABILITY

Different life experiences can impact people's comfort with expressing and exploring curiosity. For example, a Black boy who is curious about his environment may need to show vigilance because he may fear that his exploration will be perceived negatively. Below, we offer guidance on exploring curiosity from various perspectives so storytellers can accurately and inclusively portray how curiosity may appear across various identities.

DID YOU KNOW? When content is created from a research-informed perspective, it better supports adolescent mental health. Stories that reflect [Authentically Inclusive Representation \(AIR\)](#) deliver stronger financial returns and a positive impact on Gen Z audiences.

GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND CURIOSITY

4 Portray women leaders who demonstrate curiosity about others' perspectives and earn respect from others, particularly men.



Why? Qualities often associated with women, like listening and empathy, aren't always acknowledged as leadership traits.

Research insight: In a 2018 study of 2,431 youth, more than a third (34%) of teen girls and almost as many teen boys (28%) said girls have fewer chances than boys to be leaders.

9 TIPS FOR FOSTERING CURIOSITY THROUGH STORYTELLING

5 Show queer teens being curious about their sexuality.

Why? Queer teens who are given the space to be curious about themselves have stronger mental health than queer teens who avoid, or are forced to avoid, identity exploration.



DID YOU KNOW?

Gen Z tends to see reclaiming the word "queer" as a way to counter oppression. They view it as a term that extends beyond pre-existing categories, capable of supporting a more inclusive, common identity within the LGBTQIA+ community.

Research insight: A 2022 survey found that 20% of Gen Z, 10% of millennials, and 5% of Gen X identify as LGBTQIA+.



RACE, ETHNICITY, AND CURIOSITY

6 Show adolescents being curious about their racial/ethnic identity.

Why? Adolescents who explore and feel positive about their racial/ethnic identities have better self-esteem, mental health, and academic achievement records.



DID YOU KNOW?

Racial/ethnic identity is a person's thoughts and feelings about their race and ethnicity, as well as the journey of forming and evolving those thoughts and feelings.

Research insight: A study found that 94% of eighth-grade African-American students faced discrimination at least once in the previous 3 months.

7 Depict characters showing genuine interest in people from different countries or cultural backgrounds.

Why? Regularly engaging with multicultural media promotes youth awareness and acceptance of diverse cultures.



Research insight: A greater number of individuals are open to accepting immigrants compared to those who are not. A 2017 study indicated that 87% of Australians, 79% of Canadians, 68% of Americans, and 67% of Europeans support the notion of immigrants becoming citizens of their respective countries.



DISABILITY AND CURIOSITY

8 Show characters without disabilities who are curious about (rather than presume) the most helpful ways to assist characters with disabilities.

Why? When people with disabilities feel fully seen and cared for, it helps increase their sense of belonging.



Research insight: 1 in 4 U.S. citizens report having some kind of disability, including mobility limitations, cognitive impairments, and sensory disabilities.

9 Portray neurotypical and neurodivergent characters showing curiosity about each other.

Why? Differences in neurological functions, like autism, ADHD, or dyslexia, are as natural and valuable as variations in ethnicity, gender, or culture.



DID YOU KNOW?

Neurodivergence highlights the idea that there is no single "normal" way for the brain to function, and society should embrace and accommodate these differences to create a more inclusive and understanding world for all individuals.

Research insight: Neurodiverse individuals often possess unique skills, perspectives, and ways of thinking that can contribute to innovative problem-solving and creativity. Their diverse cognitive approaches can enrich workplaces, educational settings, and communities.