



From Curiosity to Feelings of Pride

Curiosity begins the mastery cycle. Children are naturally curious. Their eyes are exploring from the minute they are born, wondering “What's out there? Where am I?” The urge to explore is so strong for toddlers that they forget all else. They wander away, walk off stairs, forget about rules, and refuse food just to satisfy their curiosity. *Curiosity is a gateway to learning.*

Curiosity leads to exploration. As children explore, they discover new things. “What did I find? How does it work?” *Exploration is what triggers learning.*

Exploration leads to discovery. Discovery is exciting. For humans, new things seem challenging. “Can I do this? Can I have that? Can I understand what this is about?” This challenge to try something new this pushes us ... to climb mountains, to like using the computer, or even to go to the moon. *Discovery starts the challenge of learning.*

Learning happens with experimentation. When babies discover something, they will try it many different ways: They look it over, they shake it, they taste it, they pound it, and they throw it. If they learn that it tastes good, it is something to eat. *If they cannot figure out how to understand their discovery, they will ask for your help.*

Learning happens through relationships with other people. Asking questions, asking for help, watching, and modeling are key ways we all learn about something new. Other people are often the best resource to help us because they can demonstrate and explain. Adults also read for information or instruction in order *to understand what they are curious about.*

Practice strengthens learning. Learning excites a child; then the child repeats the action, and learning is strengthened. Most toddlers will practice a newly learned skill until they feel in charge of it. The new walker wants to do nothing but practice walking. For adults, walking does not take thought because the mental pathways are so strong. We have practiced it well. *Practice leads to competence.*

Mastery leads to a feeling of competence. When beginning walkers feel safe walking with hands outstretched, they try walking while carrying something. They practice and fall; they practice some more until they are good at it. *They feel a sense of control which is the feeling of competence.*

Confidence is that feeling of mastery. When we feel competent or good at something, we own the new skill. It becomes part of us, and we can use this knowledge selectively when we want or need it. We do not have to practice; we know we can walk when we want to. When a child feels confident in her ability to walk, she quits practicing walking and starts trying to climb or run instead.

Pride comes from mastery. This is what leads to self-esteem. When children know that they can explore, take the challenge, ask questions, practice a new skill, and become competent, they become strong from within. When you master a skill, you have become a new person.