

Cultivating a Life of Curiosity /



The Studio /

Steven Morris & The Studio



The World I Live In

I have refused to live
locked in the orderly house of
reasons and proofs.
The world I live in and believe in
is wider than that. And anyway,
what's wrong with Maybe?

You wouldn't believe what once or
twice I have seen. I'll just
tell you this:
only if there are angels in your head will
you ever, possibly, see one.

by Mary Oliver



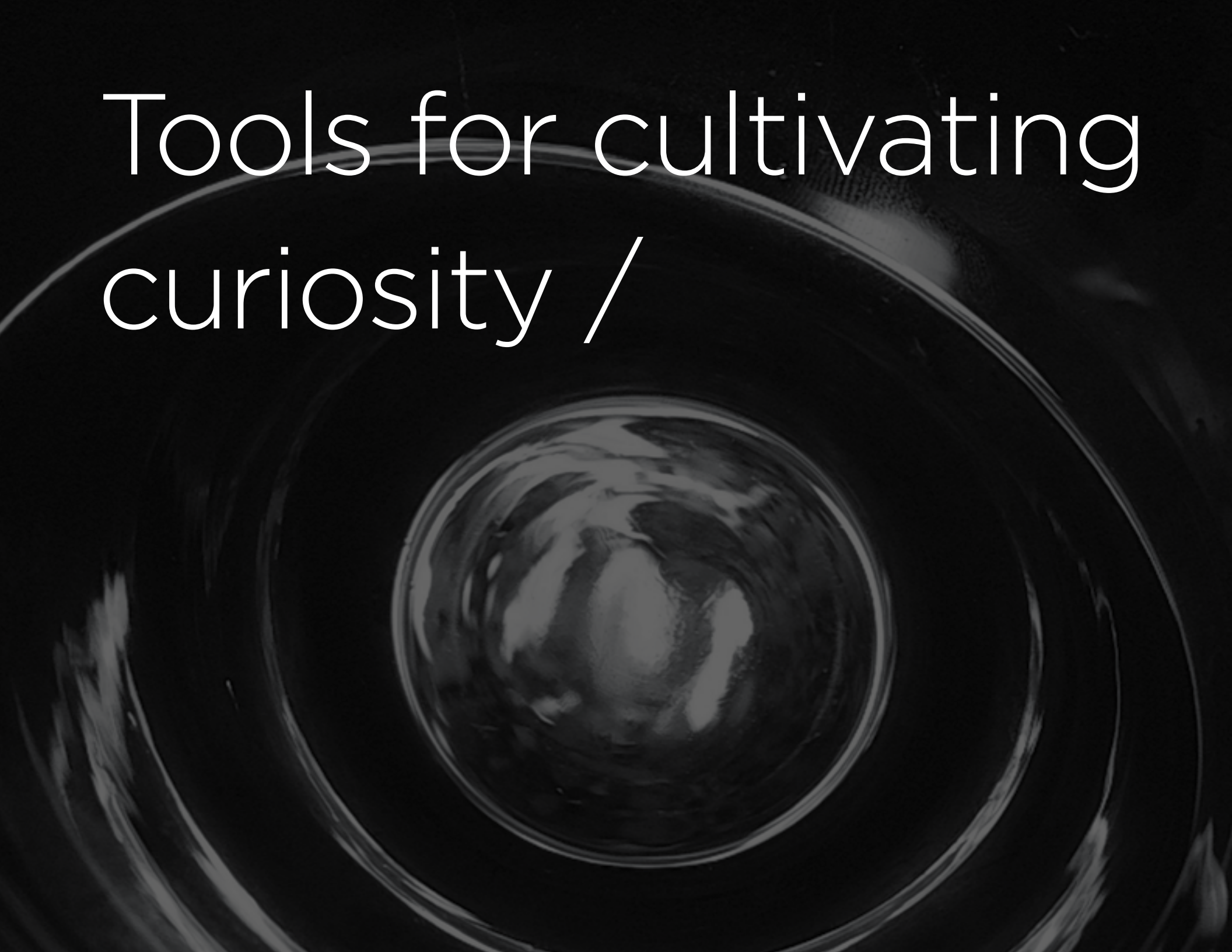
Curiosity is a state of Dynamic Neutral.

Curiosity is the vehicle in which we increase knowledge; it is the threshold for learning anything new; it is the operating system to all learning and insight; it is the lens through we permit ourselves to see anew, regardless of our age or experience level; it is the necessary ingredient to living a creative life, a life of artistry and a life-long learner.

As leaders, professionals and entrepreneurs we are noticers...but we're not passive noticers, we engage in noticing; it's the form of noticing that draws together uncommon things. We connect things we see, feel, hear, read, absorb and witness and we apply them to other similar or dissimilar things.

In order to be curious, you need to suspend our embedded knowings and assumptions, and lean into the unknown state where things may fail, questions are unanswered, and you do not know. We enter into this space with an openness that allows for unseen possibilities to present themselves or make possible what was once inconceivable.

Tools for cultivating
curiosity /



The demands of our fast-paced and screen-filled lives are eroding silence and contemplation (why mindfulness is such a trend). Our thinking time, our imaginative time, our contemplative time, is getting taken up by social media screen time, traffic, TV, news outlets, etc. While it's important to be informed, if that's all we do we won't have the space to imagine.

And, beware bowing to the false god of big data.

Friends of curiosity:

Silence
Stillness
Presence
Wide horizons
Nature
Questioning
Humility
Deep listening



Curiosity truisms.

We cannot **consume** and **create**
at the same time.

We cannot **know** and **be curious**
at the same time.

Data never created anything.

The background of the slide is a dark, grayscale image of a large pile of crumpled paper. Some Japanese text is visible on the paper, such as "さもない方がよいであります" (It is better not to say that).


1 / We ask lots of the right questions?

Dumb questions = humility

Catalytic questions = question that lead to better questions and outcomes.

Blue sky questions = questions that explore imaginary outcomes; thought experiments. / “what if...?” / “could it be...?” / “Why, why, why...?”,

Beautiful questions = These are questions that are more likely to apply to your personal life, but can apply to times when you’re considering or reconsidering your vocational path. They’re questions that don’t have easy answers, questions that cannot be answered with the strategic mind, questions that have no right to go away.




**2 / We listen
without
judgment.**

90/10 rule /

When talking with clients or prospects, by actually being curious, as opposed to simply winning the work or getting the job, we infuse ourselves into the situation.

Suspend all preconceived notions. Most of us size up and make assumptions as we listen to others. Curious people, on the other hand, have no hidden agenda. They seek to understand the perspectives of others, and are willing to sit in ambiguity, open and curious without being invested in the outcome. Curious people are non-blaming, non-shaming, and supportive, working together, focused on exploring options to find the best solution, one that supports collaboration and leads to innovation.

3 / We embrace silence and non- distraction.



Tools: Forest bathing. Zen walking. Meditation.
Contemplation.

The gifts of your unconscious mind.

Our conscious mind is our strategic mind. It exists about two feet around us. It us make pro/con lists, frames problems for our clients and leveraging facts to set up the current state of challenges and problems.

But, the reason we have so many ideas when we're in the shower, out for a walk, running or just daydreaming, is that we're tapping into the intelligence of our sub-conscious mind. This part of our mind is what holds all of the past books we've read, conversations we've had, classes we've taken, speeches we've seen, movies we've seen, dreams, aspirations and ideas that seem far off and long forgotten.

Our unconscious mind also taps into our intuition, our gut, our heart, our higher intelligence. Here we can lean into a field of wisdom that comes from nowhere and everywhere.

So, when you're looking to solve a problem, especially a big, important or complex one, go for a walk, take a run, shower, meditate, look out at horizon. And, don't pull out the phone. In fact, leave it behind, unless you have the discipline to not check your email or social media feeds.

4 / We make time and space for curiosity.

Tools: Thinking time. Morning rituals. Journaling.

Schedule thinking time.

Once per week for about an hour or so, schedule time to do nothing but think. Find a quiet space with a wide horizon and ensure that you are not using any digital device. No listening to music (except perhaps Baroque), no screens, no plans. Ideally, find a wide horizon to look out upon. Feel free to bring a journal, though. And simply think.

Morning ritual.

Mine includes meditation, journaling, then movement, running, yoga or surf. This starts your day with clear intentionality and moves you smoothly from your subconscious dream-state into a conscious state. There's lots of great online tools for the creation of morning rituals. Look them up, find the ones that best suit you, and be consistent with them.



**5 / We live in
the world of
possibilities.**

Here's a prompt to journal about.

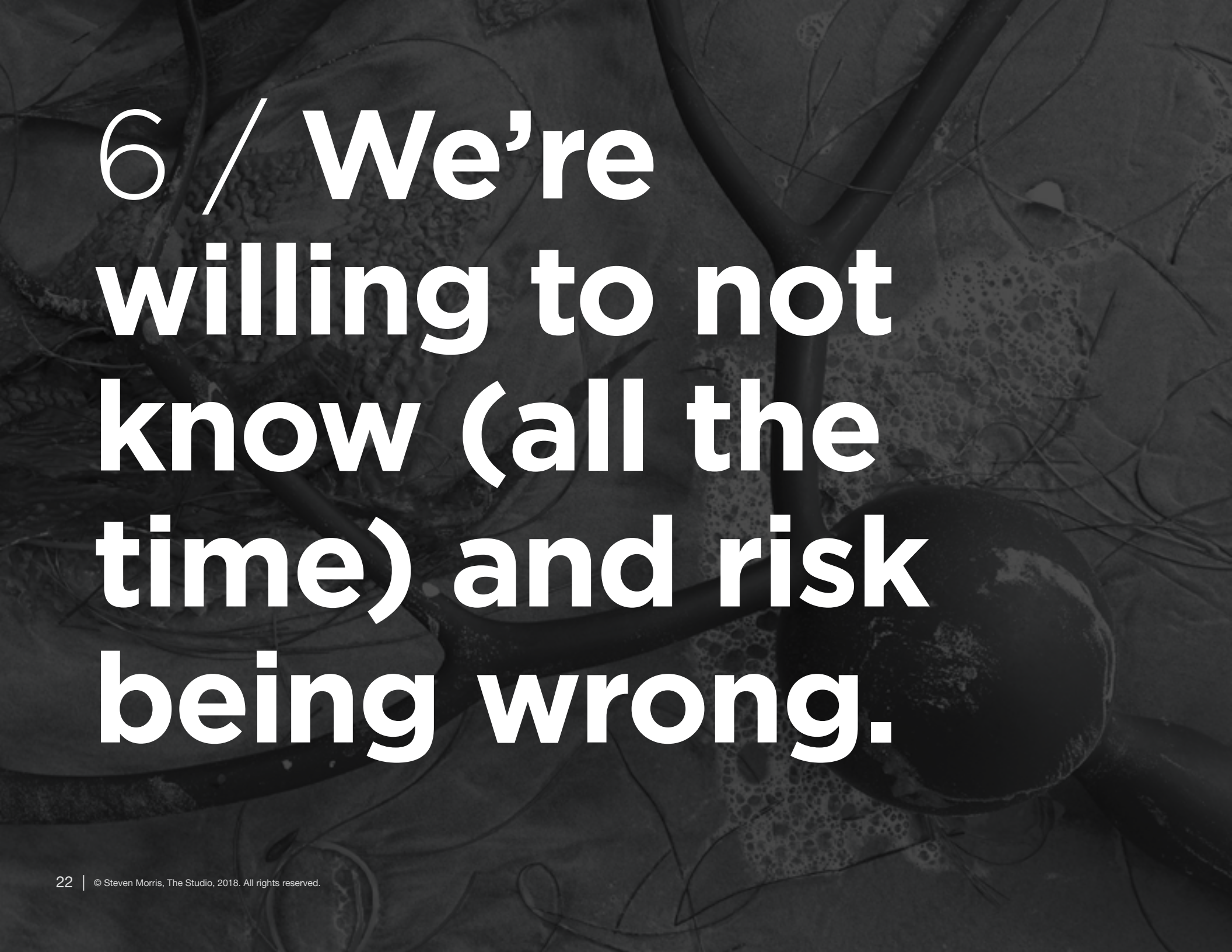
Most of us walk around with the same 7 in our heads. What are the 7 you haven't yet flirted with?

The Possibility Paradox: We feel most relaxed and secure when things are relatively certain, but we feel most alive when they're not.

By seeking surprise, we live with wonder. When we have too much surprise, we experience anxiety, but when we don't have enough, we get bored and disengaged.

Curious people welcome surprise in their lives: We try new foods, talk to a strangers, we travel to unknown places, or ask a question they've never asked before.


Welcoming surprise is just asking yourself, 'How alive do I want to feel, how do I want to live?'



**6 / We're
willing to not
know (all the
time) and risk
being wrong.**

Yes, expertise is important, even critical. And knowing things is also essential. Even though we should build and maintain an expertise within our profession, we need to make room for the wide array of things that we do not know—which will always be more than we do know.

By suspending what we do know, we make room to learn many new things.

The background of the slide features dark, silhouetted palm trees against a slightly lighter, dark grey background. The trees are positioned on the left and right sides, with their fronds extending towards the center.

**7 / We don't
allow our past
to dictate our
future.**

Because we, as professional noticers, live in the world of possibilities, we don't let the facts and emotions of the past to dictate our present state or our future, or the possibilities of our future.

Imaging this: You're the Captain of your own ship (it can be any ship of your choosing) and you're charting a course to a wide open ocean. It's a direction of your choosing and you can go anywhere you want in this vast open ocean. You turn around and you see the wake of water behind you. Now ask yourself this: Can the wake drive the boat?



**8 / We're fully
present.**

How many of you have attended meetings where people's laptops are open (not for note taking), folks are on their smart phones? How many times have you sat in restaurants and you see a table full of people and they're not talking to one another, but rather looking into their smart phones?

Kill distractions. Put down the screens. Minimize noise.

Look people in the eye and be present to them. It's among the greatest gifts you can give and you'll learn a ton about the people around you.

9 / We know when to say “no.”

A seashell, possibly a nautilus, is positioned in the lower right quadrant of the image. It is a light, translucent color with a spiral pattern, resting on a dark, grainy, and textured surface that resembles sand or gravel. The lighting creates a soft glow around the shell, highlighting its form against the dark background.

Because we cannot consume and create at the same time, we have to be particular about what we say yes to. The most powerful word in your creation-oriented world is “no.” Some of the most successful people on the planet are masters at saying “no” because they understand that it distracts them from the deep work and most important learnings they’re focused on.

Say “no” freely, often and with respect.

10 / We take
risks.

Two kinds of adventurers /

The navigator / the one who guides others to foreign and less-traveled places. This is both the tour-guide and the navigator. The power of the navigator is that she can: 1. help you get there; 2. guide you through the pitfalls; 3. give you context about what you're experiencing. An example: the foreign tour-guide.

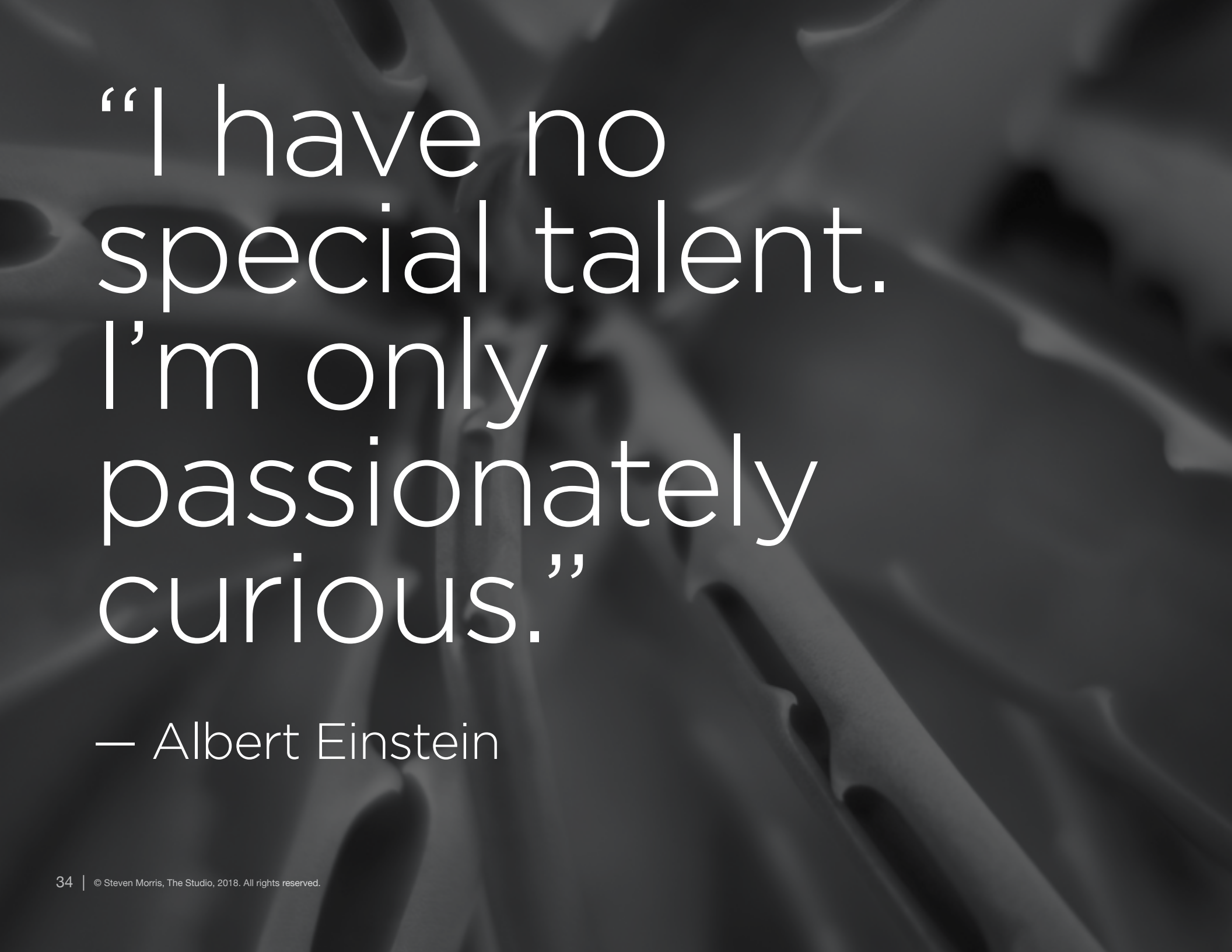
The explorer / the one who goes there first. This is the one who is crazy enough to go where no one has gone before. They go to the land of the unsure thing. They do things that others haven't attempted and just might not work. This is also the plight of the entrepreneur.



**11 / We honor
the paradox of
confinement.**

Why boundaries are good for curiosity and creativity.

For most creatives and artists there's not much more terrifying than a blank page and the need to create. Because of this, we often need some guidelines. In the creative industry this can take the form of a creative brief or project guidelines, and deadlines, too. Now that we have the sandbox defined we can freely create within the boundaries. And, paradoxically, it actually gives us more freedom to create. So, the next time you're stuck in your curious exploration, you might try putting even more restrictions on our creation or exploration request. You may be surprised by the freedom offers for you to explore.



“I have no
special talent.
I’m only
passionately
curious.”

— Albert Einstein

Want to know more about the Studio?

StudioLeadership.com / The Studio is a transformation team, a consultancy, and a place to practice leadership in expanded ways. It's a place where you explore how to lead and live like an artist—an adventurer, risk-taker, communicator, and a creator—even if you don't see yourself as an artist.

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