

By Jeff Anderson
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Curiosity: “For Sale - Your intimate secrets, longings and purchases!”

This Fall we are planning a DLI Class ‘*How Social Media Helped Trump Win The Presidency*’. The Instructor will be Adam Schindler who served as a key strategist with the digital marketing firm that utilized data driven targeting techniques to help elect President Trump.

Planning conversations with Adam included the hot topic of fake news and how do we successfully manage our ongoing learning in a world where targeted information may not be trustworthy. Fake news is one of many dangers lurking in our everyday environments that bring added complexity into our modern lives.

Last week, we learned why curiosity and learning can be as pleasurable as ice cream. This week, let’s discuss curiosity from the perspective of learning to protect ourselves online.

Have you ever wished you could wall yourself away from the dangers and puzzling aspects of modern life? Years ago, people built fortresses with high walls and moats of deep water to separate their lives from outside dangers. Likely, many of us were drawn to the rural remoteness of The Texas Hill Country to escape the less desirable aspects of bigger cities. The idea of building moats around our lives for protection and pleasure is an age-old concept.

Today, developing effective life moats is more complicated than ever. No matter how remote or protected we seek our lives to become we find ourselves more connected through communications to the outside world than ever before in history.

Today, cell phones disclose our every location, satellites deliver media influence everywhere with varying degrees of trust, our bank accounts are digital and available in cyberspace, online communications leave us vulnerable to the unscrupulous, website visits retain fingerprints of our every engagement and marketers harvest our digital pathways to target us. All, while our knowledge base is rapidly obsolete in helping us cope with forces of change created by technology.

Gary Reback, an antitrust lawyer who represented Netscape in the successful 1999 Antitrust suit against Microsoft said in regards to technology monopolies, “First it was AT&T, then it was IBM, then it was Microsoft.” Today we might argue that Google and Amazon have rapidly grown to be considered this era’s monolithic tech enterprises.

FOR SALE: Your intimate secrets, longings and purchases!

Insightfully, Reback comments about today’s communications giants, “One of the differences is that the dominant companies of today have a much greater penetration into your personal life. *They say they sell ads but in reality they sell your most intimate secrets and longings and purchases — that’s what they sell.*”

So, how do we successfully protect ourselves from the dangers of curiosity and meet our communication needs when enterprises, large and small, are aimed at gaining our most intimate secrets, longings, purchases and confidential info? To look for answers, let’s examine a common

denominator of success in all personal pursuits.

Albert E.N. Gray in his book, 'The Common Denominator of Success' offered this insight. "The common denominator of success – the secret of every person who has ever been successful – lies in the fact that he or she formed the habit of doing things that failures don't like to do. It's just as true as it sounds and it's just as simple as it seems."

Gray elaborates, "Perhaps you have wondered why it is that your most successful peers seem to like to do the things that you don't like to do. They don't. And I think this is the most encouraging statement I have ever offered to anyone. But if they don't like to do these things, then why do they do them? Because by doing the things they don't like to do, they can accomplish the things that they want to accomplish."

How does Gray's teaching on success relate with our purpose of understanding the dangers of curiosity in modern online communications? How might it lead us forward in building our own protective moat while enjoying the amazing productivity advantages of the online world?

Be Safe and Secure Online

Former Air Force Director of Cyber Security Colonel Tom Dean in the DLI Class 'Cyber Security - 'Be Safe and Secure Online' explained it this way. "To protect yourself online, you must be purposed to take personal responsibility for your every action and activity."

Discipline in cyber-security means employing pro-active actions like: taking responsibility to be selective in the websites we visit;

strengthening passwords and changing them often; paying careful attention to all e-mails for authenticity; employing two-step identification for financial and confidential websites; routinely updating malware protection and protecting home routers with periodic factory resets.

In essence as we discipline ourselves by employing new habits, we develop stronger protective moats around our communication lives. As Gray said, "By doing the things we don't like to do, we can accomplish the things that we want to accomplish."

The concept of employing disciplines of responsibility also applies to protecting ourselves from curiosity in regards to the bias of fake news. This topic will be explored in depth in Adam Schindler's upcoming fall DLI Class using the subject of fake news to help us learn '*How to think instead of allowing the world to influence what we think.*'

Until next week...remember "Learning is a treasure which accompanies its owner everywhere!"

About Anderson - DLI Chairman Jeff Anderson is servant pastor of SERV Kerrville, a nonprofit collaborating with community partners to empower lifelong learning.

Dynamic Learning Institute - The Fall Semester of DLI will return after Labor Day with an exciting roster of Classes featuring Hill Country neighbors with interesting lifetime experiences to share with you