



# White Butterfly

J o u r n a l

CURIOSITY  
SAVED THE CAT  
BY ANA LORENA  
SANCHEZ

The Courage  
to Ask

From Rigidity  
to Wonder

*The*  
CURIOSITY  
ISSUE



# White Butterfly

J o u r n a l

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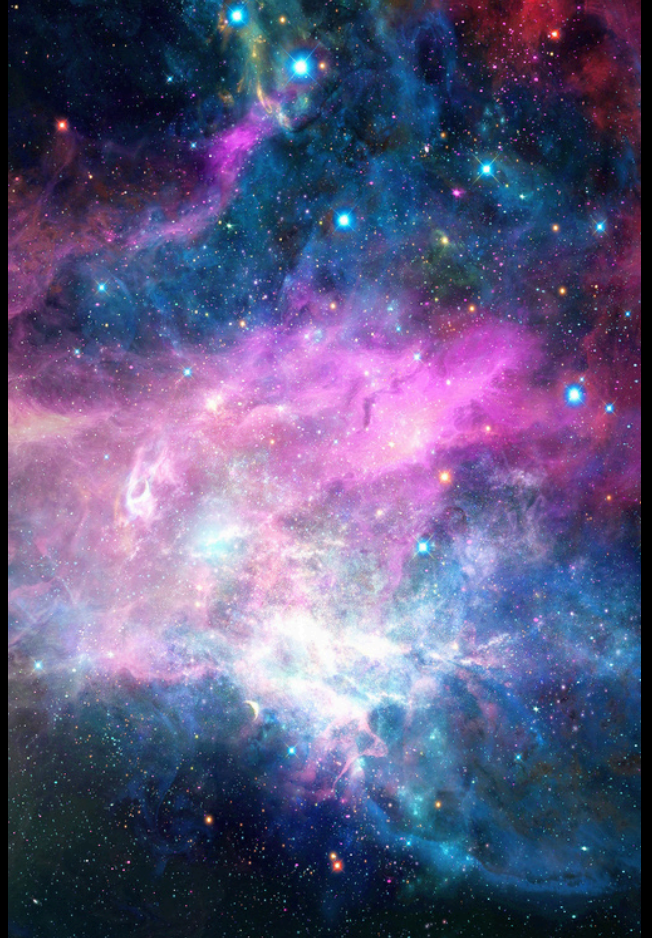
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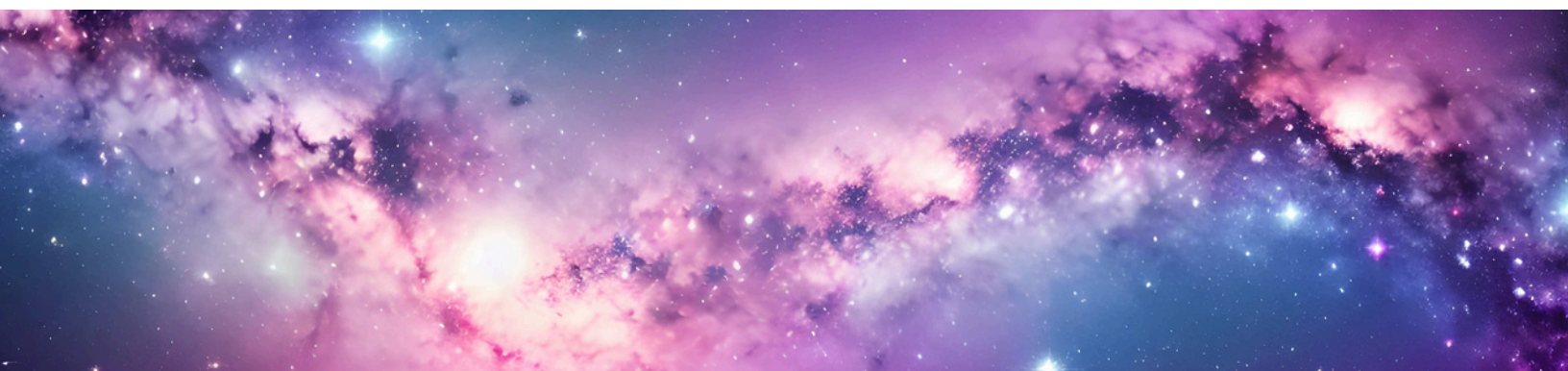
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# From the Editor

## THE COCOON



Curiosity has never been optional for me—it's how I've navigated the world. My brain has always moved fast, asked too many questions, taken detours, made connections others didn't see. What some might call distractibility, I've come to understand as a gift: the hallmark of a curious mind. Yes, I have symptoms of ADHD. But instead of fighting them, I've chosen to listen. To follow the questions. To build a life around wonder.

This issue of The White Butterfly Journal is a celebration of that kind of wonder—the bold, wandering, sometimes inconvenient kind.

The kind that rewires tired brains. That heals by asking, not knowing. That lives in toddlers, in artists, in scientists, in seekers. It's not always tidy, but it is always alive.

Inside, you'll find voices that remind us curiosity is more than a trait. It's a way forward. A way home. A way back to ourselves.

Here's to the misfits, the question-askers, the overthinkers, and the endlessly intrigued. You belong here.

With wonder,

I'VE COME TO  
UNDERSTAND AS  
A GIFT: THE  
HALLMARK OF A  
CURIOUS MIND.

*Dr. A. Hector*  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



# From *m* our Readers

"I've never read anything that made me pause like 'The Integrity of Saying No.' It was as if someone finally put into words the boundary battles I've been silently facing for years. Thank you for giving voice to something so sacred."



— **MARISA V.,  
SOUTH FLORIDA**

"I laughed out loud and cried a little reading 'The Body Laughs First.' It reminded me that laughter isn't just a release—it's medicine. I needed that permission to laugh again."



— **JORGE C.,  
SAN FRANCISCO,  
CA**

Thank you for sharing that. Boundaries can be one of the most courageous expressions of self-respect—and I'm so moved that the piece resonated with your journey. Keep honoring that inner compass. We see you.

**DR. HECTOR**

That's exactly it. Laughter is holy work. I'm grateful the article met you where you are and helped you reconnect with joy. Keep laughing—it's how we remember who we are.

Always in your corner,

**DR. HECTOR**



# THE COURAGE TO ASK



**WE OFTEN THINK HEALING BEGINS WITH ANSWERS. BUT MORE OFTEN, IT BEGINS WITH THE COURAGE TO ASK. TO ASK "WHY DOES THIS STILL HURT?" OR "WHAT DO I NEED RIGHT NOW?" OR "WHO COULD I BECOME IF I STOPPED PRETENDING?"**

There's a quiet turning point in every healing journey: a question. Sometimes it begins as a whisper—"What if this isn't all there is?"—and other times, it arrives like a storm: "Why do I feel this way?" But no matter how it shows up, curiosity is often the moment we decide we're worth knowing more deeply.

Curiosity isn't the loudest trait. It doesn't demand center stage. Instead, it tugs gently at our sleeves, asking us to pay attention. And when we listen, it transforms everything—our relationship to pain, our creativity, even our capacity for self-compassion. I remember a patient, we'll call her Elena, who came into my practice burdened by burnout and perfectionism. Her story was filled with achievement, but she felt emotionally hollow. For weeks, she asked questions about



performance—how to be more productive, less anxious. But one day, through tears, she finally asked, “Who would I be if I wasn’t fixing something all the time?”

That was the moment curiosity cracked open the door.

We spent months exploring that one question. It led her to poetry again. To painting. To rest. But more than anything, it reconnected her to parts of herself she thought were long gone.

Curiosity isn’t just about gathering facts—it’s about being willing to meet yourself in new light. It’s the moment you stop running on autopilot and start asking what truly fits, what truly matters, and what needs to change.

In therapy, we call this the shift from “doing mode” to “being mode.” But you don’t need a therapist’s office to make that shift. You just need one question you’re brave enough to sit with.

Here are a few to begin:

- What am I avoiding right now, and why?
- What would I try if I knew I wouldn’t fail?
- Where do I feel most alive—and how can I give that part of me more room?

The courage to ask isn’t always comfortable. But it’s honest. And in a world that moves fast and praises certainty, choosing to ask rather than assume is an act of emotional resilience.

So ask. Wonder. Go gently. Not because you need to be fixed, but because you deserve to be known.



# Power Up *Spotlight:* Curiosity

"WONDER IS HOW THE BRAIN WHISPERS: STAY OPEN."



Curiosity  
/cu·ri·os·i·ty/ — noun

1. A strong desire to know or learn something.
  2. "Children show natural curiosity about the world around them."
  3. An unusual or interesting object or fact.
  4. "The cabinet was filled with curiosities from her travels."
- Origin: From Latin *cūriōsitās*, meaning "eagerness for knowledge."





Curiosity isn't just for kids and scientists—it's a daily brain exercise that strengthens focus, softens fear, and invites joy. When you practice curiosity, you increase dopamine, deepen relationships, and interrupt the spiral of stress.

It's the bridge between confusion and clarity.

Try this:

Instead of asking "Why is this happening to me?" try:

"What am I being invited to learn?"

Quick Practices:

- Take a 5-minute walk and notice something new.
- Ask one open-ended question in your next conversation.

– Journal: "What haven't I noticed about myself lately?"

Curiosity is a muscle—and every time you wonder, you grow.

**"CURIOSITY IS  
THE QUIET  
COURAGE TO  
ASK, EVEN  
WHEN THERE'S  
NO CLEAR  
ANSWER."**

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# IN GOOD HANDS

with Rishi Sood M.D.

## Reawakening the Brain's Drive to Learn, Heal, and Explore

Curiosity—the deep, inner pull to explore, learn, and make sense of the unknown—is one of the most defining and adaptive features of the human brain. It drives innovation, fuels learning, and underpins resilience. But curiosity is not just a trait—it's a neurobiological force, orchestrated in large part by dopamine, the brain's key neurotransmitter of motivation, novelty, and reward.

### DOPAMINE: THE ENGINE OF CURIOSITY

When something piques our interest—a strange fact, a question left unanswered, a mystery we want to solve—dopamine is released from the ventral tegmental area (VTA) and sent to key brain areas like the nucleus accumbens, prefrontal cortex, and hippocampus. This dopamine

signal enhances focus, motivation, and memory. Interestingly, it's not the reward itself that triggers the biggest dopamine release—it's the anticipation of something meaningful or new. This reward anticipation system explains why curiosity is so powerful: it creates a neurochemical state that makes us want to keep going, exploring, and learning. Studies have shown that people remember information better when it's learned during states of high curiosity—even when the information is unrelated. Curiosity essentially primes the brain for learning.

### CURIOSITY AND MENTAL HEALTH: A NATURAL ANTIDEPRESSANT AND COGNITIVE ENHANCER

Because curiosity is so intimately tied to dopamine, it has direct

implications for mental health—especially for conditions where dopamine transmission is disrupted, such as ADHD, depression, and anxiety.

### ADHD: ENGAGING THE DISTRACTED BRAIN

ADHD is associated with underactive dopamine circuits, which leads to difficulty sustaining attention and resisting distraction. Curiosity can help anchor attention by naturally boosting dopamine. Creating environments rich in novelty, offering choices, and turning tasks into puzzles or mysteries (e.g., “What happens if I try it this way?”) can hold attention far longer than routine repetition. This is why gamified learning, passion-driven projects, and experiential education often work so well for people with ADHD.



## DEPRESSION: REIGNITING THE SPARK

Depression flattens the brain's reward system. Dopamine levels drop, and with them go motivation, energy, and interest in life. But curiosity can serve as a gentle entry point back into engagement. Small moments of wonder—a new book, an unexpected question, a change in scenery—can begin to lift the fog. Practices like “curiosity journaling,” asking open-ended questions (“What surprised me today?”), or exploring something new (no matter how small) can incrementally restore dopaminergic tone and reawaken a sense of purpose.

## ANXIETY: SHIFTING FROM FEAR TO EXPLORATION

Anxiety narrows our focus onto perceived threats. It is rigid, defensive, and intolerant of uncertainty. Curiosity, by contrast, welcomes uncertainty as a doorway to understanding. Encouraging anxious individuals to adopt an “investigative” mindset—“What happens when I stay with this feeling?” instead of “How do I get rid of this?”—fosters cognitive flexibility and emotional resilience. In mindfulness, this approach is called “beginner’s mind,” where we gently observe our experiences with openness and nonjudgment.

## THE DOPAMINE DRAIN: HOW DOOMSCROLLING AND REPETITION KILL CURIOSITY

Despite our biology being wired for curiosity, modern habits like constant news consumption and doomscrolling can hijack and

blunt the dopamine system. These behaviors mimic curiosity—they feel urgent, novel, and important—but they offer low-quality stimulation and little true reward. When we expose our brain to the same types of information (e.g., fear-based news cycles, social media outrage), we flood it with predictable stimuli, triggering chronic stress and dopamine desensitization.

Over time, this leads to dopamine fatigue: things feel dull, attention wanes, and we compulsively seek stimulation without satisfaction. Doomscrolling gives the illusion of discovery, but it actually reinforces helplessness, heightens anxiety, and suppresses true curiosity. In ADHD, this worsens distractibility and undermines intrinsic motivation. In depression, it deepens passivity.

In anxiety, it feeds hypervigilance. Ultimately, it disconnects us from the exploratory, adaptive behaviors that promote growth and well-being.

Curiosity is not a luxury—it is a biological necessity for learning, emotional flexibility, and mental health. When we harness curiosity, we engage dopamine in a healthy and sustainable way, strengthening the brain's ability to adapt, remember, and grow. In a world that increasingly offers overstimulation without depth, reclaiming our curiosity is both a personal and collective act of resilience. Whether we are navigating ADHD, lifting ourselves from the fog of depression, or quieting the storm of anxiety, curiosity can be the spark that reawakens joy, purpose, and possibility.





"WONDER BEGINS WHERE  
EXPLANATIONS END."



PHOTOGRAPHY BY AI

A child's mind: where galaxies spark and  
possibilities have no gravity.

# Somatic Sketch: What Curiosity Feels Like

Inspired by the sensory worlds of Olafur Eliasson and the evolving role of AI in imagination

What does curiosity feel like—not as a passing thought, but as a sensation in the body?

To answer this, we step into the space between art and embodiment. Olafur Eliasson's installations invite us to feel with our senses—to engage light, color, movement, and scale in ways that bypass logic. The shimmer of fog. The hum of geometry. A ceiling that becomes a sun. His work speaks in sensation. And so does curiosity.

This article is paired with AI-generated images—otherworldly, nature-bending, often impossible—created as visual echoes of Eliasson's installations. These images don't mimic the real; they stretch it. And in doing so, they remind us: curiosity is the gateway to wonder.







## A SOMATIC PORTRAIT OF CURIOSITY

In the body, curiosity looks like:

- Eyes softening, then widening
- Shoulders relaxing as the breath drops deeper
- A subtle tilt of the head, like a question mark forming in posture
- The nervous system shifting from “guarded” to “open”

There’s a lightness to it. Not the giddiness of excitement, but a quiet alertness. A readiness. Like something is about to begin.

## WHAT AI TEACHES US ABOUT CURIOSITY

These images you see in this

article—impossible landscapes, glowing cocoons, surreal room patterns—were generated by AI in collaboration with prompts rooted in human wonder.

Here’s what’s powerful: AI, when used with intention, can mirror curiosity back to us. It expands what’s possible to imagine. It lets us say: What if? And instead of waiting for tools, we build with them.

Just like Eliasson transforms physical space to stir internal reflection, AI can stretch visual space to awaken new internal questions.

The point isn’t the tech. The point is the spark it ignites.

## CURIOSITY AS SOMATIC INTELLIGENCE

Curiosity is an embodied skill. It requires a calm enough nervous system to want to explore—not just survive.

When you feel that flicker of interest or the urge to turn toward something unknown, notice how your body responds.

You might feel:

- A warm pulse in your chest
- Breath flowing more freely
- A lean forward—literal or metaphorical
- Time slowing just a bit

Curiosity shifts us into presence. It invites a different kind of seeing.





"TENSION  
SIGNALS FEAR.  
OPENNESS  
SIGNALS  
CURIOSITY. LEARN  
THE DIFFERENCE  
—YOUR HEALING  
DEPENDS ON IT."

#### PRACTICE: FROM AI TO INNER AWARENESS

Take a moment with one of the AI-generated images in this article. Let your eyes wander.

Then ask:

- What do I feel in my body as I look at this?
- What do I want to know more about?
- If this were a doorway, what might be on the other side?

Then close your eyes. Ask your body the same questions. This is the dance between outer vision and inner sensing.

Whether through a mirrored room, a mist-filled tunnel, or a digital sky made of code, curiosity always begins with presence.

AI won't replace our imagination—but it can stretch it. Just like art. Just like breath. Just like the body.

So, let yourself wonder.

Let the light bend.  
Let curiosity move through you—not as a demand for answers, but as a sacred form of listening.





The White Butterfly Psychiatry & Wellness is a boutique mental health practice led by Dr. Hector Rodríguez, M.D., M.Div.—a psychiatrist, theologian, and emotional wellness expert.

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# Curiosity Is the Keyhole to Action

By Denise Merillat RN



"I've never looked through a keyhole without finding someone was looking back."

— Judy Garland

Judy Garland's words perfectly capture the essence of curiosity. It's the force that compels us to peer through that keyhole, and the adventure of discovering what lies on the other side can be one of the most transformative experiences we have as humans. For years, I was a prisoner to chronic pain. At 57, I found myself taking four pain medications and an anxiety medication daily, yet I only experienced mild relief.

Frustration mounted as I faced the prospect of spending the rest of my life dependent on powerful drugs. Then, curiosity – seemingly out of nowhere – presented a different path. I became convinced there had to be something more, something beyond medication, that could offer genuine relief. My online searches led me to a coaching program specializing in non-medical interventions for chronic pain. I dove into the research, determined to avoid any fly-by-night schemes. To my immense relief, this particular program was

well-studied and evidence-based. I decided to give it a try, and one of its core tenets was the power of curiosity in pain management. You might be wondering, "How exactly does curiosity help manage pain?" At its heart, curiosity is simply a strong desire to know or learn something. We satisfy this desire by asking key questions: who, what, where, why, and when. You might still be pondering how these basic questions could possibly alleviate chronic pain. For me, the "why" question was particularly illuminating. I discovered,

through a study in the Journal of Pain Research (March 8, 2018, vol. 11), that 50-57% of individuals with significant, debilitating chronic pain also suffer from PTSD. As a PTSD sufferer myself, this resonated deeply. Without that "why," I would have forever wondered why my pain was so relentless.

The "when" also held critical insights. My initial injury occurred 27 years ago while working at a hospice inpatient facility. I was transferring a patient and felt a pop in my right shoulder muscle. This pop was a pulled trapezius muscle. Logically, it didn't make sense that it still felt like a fresh injury decades later. Then came "where." The injury happened in a hospice facility, affecting my right shoulder. The "what" was equally significant: at that time, my marriage to my first husband was essentially ending, adding another layer of trauma to childhood experiences. Finally, I had to

identify the "who" who could transform this pain that had become my slave master. That "who" was me.

Curiosity became the cornerstone of my recovery. I embarked on numerous journeys of exploration, delving into my triggers and fears. Once identified, I had to be curious about learning new tools and techniques to lessen or even stop my chronic pain. It would be disingenuous to say I'm 100% pain-free today; I still contend with chronic conditions like rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis. However, these techniques empower me to manage the pain levels, even from those conditions. Through the key curiosity questions, I now understand that when I'm stressed, my pain increases. Instead of reaching for medication to mask the discomfort, I practice mindfulness, directly addressing the stress that triggers my pain. Finally, I want to challenge the

notion that curiosity has a bad reputation. We've all heard the adage, "curiosity killed the cat." And if you're from my generation, you might recall Curious George, whose curiosity constantly landed him in trouble, requiring rescue by the Man with the Yellow Hat. Yet, I would argue that without curiosity, we wouldn't enjoy the marvels of modern life. Curiosity fuels scientific discovery, bringing us innovations that improve our health and comfort. When we apply curiosity to our own lives—trying a new hobby, joining a new social group, or playing games—it only serves to enrich us.

I encourage you to look through the keyholes in your own life. Look without preconceived ideas. Look without expectations. Look with curiosity, and embrace the enriching journey you will undoubtedly experience!





# THE SACRED QUESTION

*A reflection on how curiosity lives in prayer,  
meditation, and faith traditions.*

There is a kind of curiosity that isn't loud. It doesn't clamor for certainty or cling to control. Instead, it lives in silence. In pause. In breath. In prayer.

Long before curiosity was studied in labs or celebrated in learning theories, it was at the heart of the spiritual life. Faith —across cultures and centuries —has always been an act of wonder. A conversation with the unknown. A surrender to mystery.





When we pray, we are asking.  
When we meditate, we are  
listening.  
When we contemplate, we are  
gazing at the divine through the  
keyhole of our finite minds.

In sacred traditions, the questions  
often matter more than the  
answers:

- “Who am I?”
- “Why am I here?”
- “What is being asked of me  
now?”

Mystics and monks did not fear  
the unknown. They walked toward  
it—sometimes trembling, often  
barefoot. Curiosity, for them, was  
not distraction. It was devotion.

Even in the most ordinary  
moments—a walk under the night  
sky, a whispered thank you, a deep  
inhale before a hard decision—  
there lives an invitation to wonder.  
To ask without needing to know.  
To seek without grasping. To love  
what can’t be named.

The sacred question is not “What  
do I believe?”

It’s “Am I still willing to be  
amazed?”

SIDEBAR PROMPT:

What are the questions I carry that  
don’t have answers?

Where in my life am I being asked  
to stay present—to mystery, not  
mastery?



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# CURIOSITY SAVED THE CAT

By Ana Lorena Sanchez  
Photography by Chris Esqueda

They say curiosity killed the cat...  
But at least the cat died knowing,  
right?

I think whoever first said  
“curiosity killed the cat” was lying.  
They just assumed the cat died  
because it never came back. But  
what if the cat simply kept  
crossing doors, venturing through  
the unknown toward better places  
—and that’s why it never returned?

Curiosity is an active, driving force  
within us—constantly hungry for  
knowledge, experience, and  
wisdom. More than that, it keeps  
us alive—not just breathing, but  
really alive.

So why all the melodrama about  
the cat’s demise? Why paint  
curiosity as the villain, when it’s  
clearly the hero of the story?  
Why is curiosity so dangerous?

The real danger about curiosity  
lies in the idea that it can—or  
should—be bypassed.

Of course curiosity is dangerous.  
But for whom? It’s dangerous for  
those who benefit from the  
individual, and the collective,  
living in fear. Yes, curiosity kills  
fear.

In a chaotic society like the one  
we’re living in, it often feels like  
our connection to ourselves and



to others is constantly being severed—and I firmly believe curiosity is the antidote. Now, I'm not the type of person to throw you a Bukowskian extreme and tell you to "find what you love and let it kill you." But I do believe curiosity might just be our only hope for human connection to survive.

I know that sounds dramatic, but stay with me on this.

Life is made up of the choices we make and the narratives we follow—or feed ourselves. And in this overstimulated, information-saturated, sales-over-truth, trends-and-likes-over-connection, polarized, AI-driven world, it's not far-fetched to say that dissociation and desensitization aren't just possible—they're highly probable.

It's not hard to understand why most of us are exhausted most of the time. Why wouldn't we be? I've always been fascinated by human behavior and believed that if I could just understand it, maybe I could help the world become a better place.

Curiosity led me to understand two things:

One, I'm never going to fully understand the human condition. And two, the best path to a better world starts with a better self.

## "CURIOSITY IS AN ACTIVE, DRIVING FORCE WITHIN US"



Photography by Ale Sosa

A better self begins with getting curious—about who we are and why we do what we do. Because when we start learning who we are and how we operate, we become more aware of how we impact the world around us.

Sounds pretty basic, right? But you'd be surprised how many of us live in comfortable oblivion. Since I tend to push my own limits, I've found that curiosity can be a direct line to our inner child.

Think about how we discovered the world when we were little. How often do we nostalgically refer to "childlike wonder"? Remember a kid's favorite question: "But why?"—and all the follow-ups that could drive adults crazy.

When did we lose that? When did we suddenly decide we knew enough to know it all? Maybe the real danger isn't curiosity—it's certainty. So let's keep asking. Exploring.



## "DON'T FEED THE FEAR. STAY CURIOUS."

I'm not asking anyone to agree to anything that doesn't feel true to their experience. All I'm saying is: stay open.

Ask questions.

Afraid of being canceled or misjudged? Don't feed the fear.

Stay curious. Ask anyway.

Lean into it. Even be intentional about it.

Curiosity, when paired with an open mind and an open heart, leads to deep listening—and maybe, just maybe, compassion and understanding will follow.

As I reflected on all this—and followed my usual curious spiral—I did a little digging.

And it turns out... we've been saying it wrong for decades.

Like a bad game of telephone, the original phrase got lost along the way.

The full version first appeared in The Washington Post in 1916, in a headline that read: "Curiosity killed the cat, but satisfaction brought it back."

And there it was—my exact feelings.

I'd rather fall, earn a few scars, get messy—but be satisfied by the knowing. By the seeking.

By the experience itself.

Because maybe curiosity didn't kill the cat at all. Maybe it saved her.

Let's remember the wonder we came here with. Now, the work isn't done just yet.

Curiosity on an individual level is powerful—but when we apply it to our communities, that's where the magic really happens.

Earlier, I mentioned the chaos and polarization we live in—the slow erosion of our shared humanity. I believe one of the ways back to each other is through dialogue.

And dialogue, real dialogue, requires presence. It requires openness. And yes, discomfort. We bridge the gap when we stay curious—especially beyond our comfort zone.

Curious even when asking the hard questions.

Curious even when hearing something that challenges our feelings, beliefs—even our so-called facts.





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# FROM RIGIDITY TO WONDER

EXPLORING THE SHIFT FROM TRAUMA-DRIVEN HYPERVIGILANCE TO  
CURIOSITY-DRIVEN OPENNESS.



Trauma teaches the body to brace  
—tight jaw, shallow breath,  
clenched muscles. Hypervigilance  
becomes a way of life, scanning  
for threats even when there are  
none. But healing invites  
something else: a softening, a  
loosening of the grip.

It invites wonder.

The journey from rigidity to  
wonder is not a leap—it's a slow,  
practiced opening. It begins with  
noticing the tightness, then  
asking: What else is possible  
here? This is where curiosity  
enters, not as pressure, but as  
invitation.



Somatic Practice: The Gentle Pivot

1. Find a quiet place to sit.  
Notice where your body feels most tense.
2. Without judgment, bring your breath to that area. Inhale deeply, exhale slowly.
3. Ask yourself: What's underneath this tension? Wait for an answer—not from your mind, but from your body.
4. Repeat gently: I am allowed to feel something new.

This is not about replacing fear with joy. It's about creating space between them—a space where curiosity can live. Where you're not reacting, but responding with presence.

Because when the body moves from bracing to breathing, from flinching to feeling, it makes room for healing. Not all at once—but one breath, one question, one softened shoulder at a time.

"CURIOSITY IS  
THE BREATH  
AFTER FEAR—  
THE MOMENT  
YOUR BODY  
REMEMBERS  
IT'S SAFE TO  
ASK AGAIN."



# White Butterfly

Journal

VO  
*The* HUMOR ISS

## THE MEDICINE OF LAUGHTER

When the  
Body Laughs  
First

In Real Life:  
Raul Gonzalez



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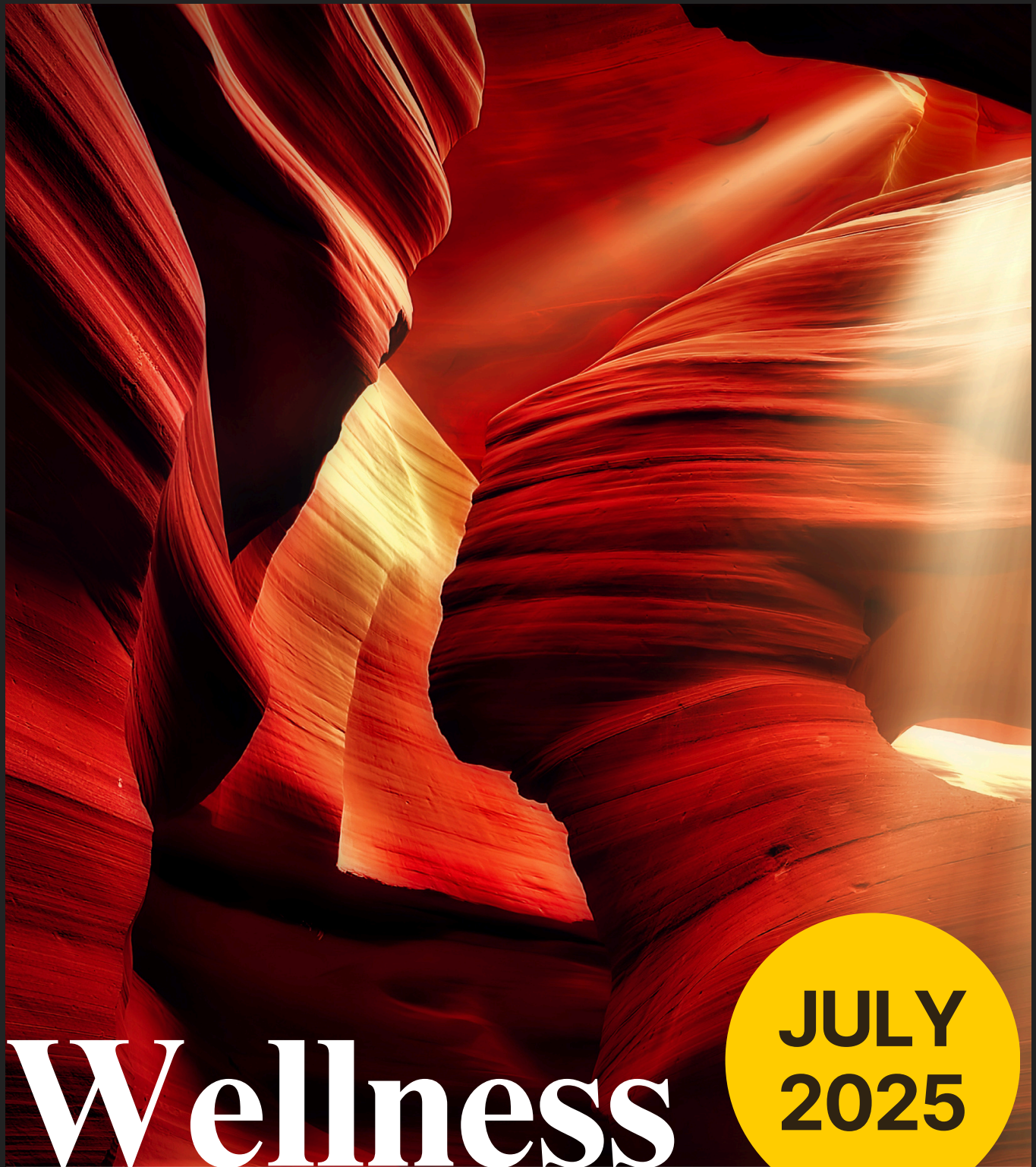
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