



Curly Conversation Starters™

by Kate Christiansen

Be purposeful

*"Seek patience and passion in equal amounts.
Patience alone will not build the temple.
Passion alone will destroy its walls".*

Maya Angelou

Patience is a virtue. At least, that's what people say. But is it? Is that what we really believe?

For example, when was the last time someone you know was rewarded or revered for being patient. And, who ever heard of anyone receiving a medal or a performance bonus for standing back from a situation to wait and see what happened next?

Patience can have positive results because it provides the opportunity for us to assess the situation. There is a level of discipline involved because it requires us to ignore our instinctive drive to react.

The problem is that the time available is often less than patience demands. There is also a risk that if we are too patient, we can over analyse or pretend we're being

patient, when really we're putting off decisions or procrastinating.

So, if patience isn't the virtue it's made out to be, when we encounter a challenge, what are the alternatives?

Well, at the other end of the behavioural spectrum, we can choose to be *pushy*. That is, pushing our ideas and pushing others to act and move forward. While this may get things moving in the short term, this approach has its own side-effects. Nobody wants to be pushed into doing something they don't want to do. As a result, the pushy approach is frequently met with resistance and push-back.

Another (possibly softer) approach to being pushy, is being persistent.

Talking about persistence always reminds me of one of my favourite books when I was young. It was called *The Digging-est Dog*. It was about a dog whose owners wanted him to learn to dig. So, to please them, the

dog started digging and kept digging until he had dug up the whole town.

That is persistence. Continuing to go and go and go, regardless of what is going on around us.

In some circumstances, this approach can be useful. However, when we're too persistent, we can become so focused on the task at hand that we stop listening and learning. Consequently, we can keep following a plan (or line of thinking), even though all the signs are saying it's no longer a good idea.

So, if being patient, pushy or persistent doesn't always deliver the best outcomes, what does?

We need to have a balance of both patience and passion. This enables us to become *purposeful*.

Being purposeful means that we wait when we need to wait, because it serves the desired outcome. Similarly, being purposeful means that we're driven to move forward, not hold back.

When we're purposeful, we are always operating with a clear view of where we are trying to get to and why it's important to get there. This helps us to stay calm and gives us the energy needed to make progress.

Curly questions to consider

Reflect in pairs

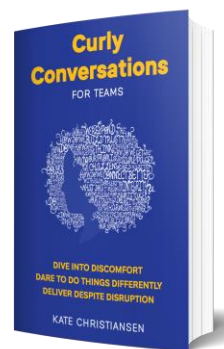
1. To what extent am I patient, pushy, persistent or purposeful when I encounter a challenge?
2. How well do these responses serve me?
3. How clear am I regarding the outcomes that I want?

Respond as a team

1. If we drew a pie chart showing the proportion of behaviours in our team that fall into each of the four responses, what would it look like?
2. How clear are we regarding the outcomes that we want to achieve as a team?
3. How well do our people outside this conversation understand those outcomes?
4. Which behaviours do we reward most in our teams?
5. How does this influence success?
6. If we drew a pie chart showing the IDEAL proportion of behaviours across each of the four responses, what would it look like?

Review and look forward

7. What would need to change?
8. Where should we go from here?



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