



June 2024 News and Notes

Reading = Summer Fun for Every Age

By Robin Joy Berenson, PhD, LMFT

Like ice cream on a hot afternoon, reading for the sheer pleasure of it can be a wonderful treat for yourself and every family member. While it can feel like a guilty indulgence, reading is a smart way to foster healthy benefits.

Family read alouds: Whether gathered in a cabin by the lake, visiting destination cities, or enjoying a staycation, summer evenings can be a special opportunity for family time. Share a book the whole family can enjoy and talk about afterward, perhaps a classic like *The Hobbit* or Madeleine L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time*.

Foster children's enjoyment of reading. Make fun the name of the game. Allow your child to select the books that he or she wishes, without regard to reading level. Whatever the topic, reading itself is valuable for developing minds, engaging the imagination, building vocabulary and honing critical thinking skills.

Summer reading can be a great way to promote a child's special interests. Is he an animal lover? Is she interested in the lives of famous artists? Teaching children that books are a way of building knowledge and expertise can instill a lifelong habit.

Get started on your summer reading list at your local Marin library. In addition to an extensive collection of quality books, Marin Public Library offers summer reading activities and challenges. This summer pick up a free "Trek into Reading" Adventure Journal to keep track of reading and explore fun activities for readers 0-12.
<http://www.marinlibrary.org/srp/>

In an article published recently by Edutopia, "Pairing Young Adult Books with Classic Literature," high school teacher Tanner Jones explains that "reading contemporary books alongside classics can help high school students better grasp the nuances and themes embedded in literature." <https://www.edutopia.org/article/pairing-youngadult-classic-literature>

In "Young Adult Novels That Teach a Growth Mindset," author Robert Ward provides a reading list of useful titles. "Use these novels to teach learning from loss and overcoming adversity to your middle schoolers and high school freshmen."
<https://www.edutopia.org/article/young-adult-novels-teach-growth-mindset-robertward>

Reading has benefits for adults, too.

An article on [psychologytoday.com](https://www.psychologytoday.com) cites a number of mental health benefits gained by reading:

- Bibliotherapy, the therapeutic use of select reading material, has been used to alleviate many different mental health challenges.
- Reading fiction has been found to improve one's social cognition and ability to empathize with others.
- New research finds that reading programs can support youth mental health through conversation and connection. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-art-effect/202203/the-mentalhealth-benefits-reading>

A number of studies ascribe physical benefits to reading, as well.

- Reading regularly not only has a calming effect but can also strengthen brain function.
- It can reduce heart rate, decrease blood pressure and allow you to disconnect from your world in a healthy way.

<https://rightasrain.uwmedicine.org/life/leisure/reading-health-benefits>

Looking for a good book? Check out this “perpetual bookshelf.”

“Book Pickings, a small but, I hope, lovely and highly usable upgrade — a perpetual bookshelf* that invites you to explore the extensive Brain Pickings book archive in a visual way,” according to Maria Popova, who founded the original site in 2006.

<http://bookpickings.brainpickings.org/>