



Lifelong learning

The desire to learn and to grow intellectually and experientially is a natural human characteristic. It's one of the qualities that distinguishes us from the rest of the animal kingdom. Assuming that the educational system hasn't crushed your soul and your job hasn't extinguished your thirst for knowledge, learning is one of the greatest activities you can pursue. It expands your viewpoint. It can give you information to improve your well-being, your quality of life and your financial security. Beyond that, learning can be a great source of enjoyment.

Most of us lead extremely busy lives, spending many hours each week just commuting to and performing our jobs. If we are lucky to have a little non-work time, it can quickly be filled with obligations of parenting, home and yard upkeep and other tasks that have to be done. Even those who appreciate the value of lifelong learning can find it difficult to make the effort. Taking adult education or enrichment classes is a great way to expand your knowledge and build skills, but it can be very time consuming. So, here are some tips for cultivating a habit of lifelong learning in a busy life:

- **Always have a book.** It doesn't matter if it takes you a week or a year to read a book. Always strive to have a book that you are reading. Take it with you so you can read it when you have time.
- **Keep a "to-learn" list.** We all have to-do lists of tasks we need to accomplish. Try starting a to-learn list of ideas you'd like to study about or learn to do. Maybe you'd like to learn a new language, build a computer or read the entire works of Shakespeare. Write it down. Plan out steps to achieve it.
- **Get intellectual friends.** Start spending time with people who think and invest time learning new things and acquiring new skills. Some of their habits may rub off on you.
- **Use guided thinking.** Einstein once said: "Any man who reads too much and uses his own brain too little falls into lazy habits of thinking." Simply studying the wisdom of others isn't enough; you have to think through ideas yourself. Spend time journaling, meditating or contemplating ideas you have learned.
- **Put it into practice.** Skill-based learning is useless if it isn't applied. Studying painting isn't the same as picking up a brush. If your knowledge can be applied, put it into practice.
- **Teach others.** You learn what you teach. If you have an outlet to communicate ideas to others, you are more likely to solidify that learning. Start a blog, mentor someone or even discuss ideas with a friend.
- **Learn in groups.** Lifelong learning doesn't mean condemning yourself to a stack of dusty textbooks. Join organizations that teach skills. Workshops, book clubs and group learning events can make educating yourself a fun, social experience.
- **Volunteer for activities that encourage learning.** Getting active in your branch, community or volunteer organizations encourages continual learning. Find something that challenges and inspires you.
- **Start a project.** Set out to do something you don't know how to do. Forced learning in this way can be fun and challenging. If you don't know anything about computers, try building one. If you consider yourself a horrible artist, try painting.
- **Follow your intuition.** Lifelong learning is like wandering through the wilderness. You can't be sure what to expect, and there isn't always an end goal in mind. Letting your intuition guide you can make self-education more enjoyable. Most of our lives have been so broken down to completely logical decisions that making choices on a whim has been stamped out.
- **Reap the rewards.** Learn information you can use. Understanding how to use certain computer programs, performing basic home or auto repairs, or becoming conversational in another language can allow one to handle projects that may otherwise require outside help. Dealing with a situation that makes use of your educational efforts can be a source of pride.
- **Make it a priority.** Few external forces are going to persuade you to learn. The desire has to come from within. It's up to you to make learning a priority in your life. ☒