

5 REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD READ

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PHOTO: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

So many times, countless actually, people have come to me and said, 'reading is just not my thing', or 'reading is boring, why not just watch the movie?' or, 'I just can't get myself to finish a book' - and thus, so many times, my heart breaks with pity. Yes, pity-- because those who say these things just haven't found the right book yet, or so I believe. And believe you me, the only way you can tolerate that mess is...with a book in your hands. While you may not know this, reading can actually help people in various ways. Except for making you a better writer (I can vouch for that), it can help in ways that can even improve your personal day-to-day life. Here are five such ways:



1

Stress Reduction – Living in the midst of the hustle and bustle that Dhaka city has to offer, we are not spared in the least when it comes to facing stress. From home, all the way to work, all the way back home- we face stress in some form or the other. A study from the University of Sussex, back in the year 2009, found that reading silently to oneself, for less than 10 minutes, reduced stress by 68 percent. In fact, reading was more effective at eliminating stress than listening to music (61 percent), having a cup of tea or coffee (54 percent) or taking a walk (42 percent). As a matter of fact, psychologists believe that just being transported into a literary world can ease the mind and heart!

2

Better Vocabulary – Now, this can not only generally come handy at any point in life, but if you are writer- than you KNOW this to be true. The one advice I give to anyone who asks me how to improve writing is to read, read, read and read. Keep reading- different writers, different genres, go to the difficult old English classics, and come back to the more flowing contemporary fiction- all of it will help. Every page, every sentence, will teach you something new- words, construction and so much more!

3

Improved focus – Probably my favourite form of improvement. You will understand from my previous story in the magazine that the one thing about smartphones and technology that really gets to me is how it reduces someone's attention, how it reduces interaction. This is where a book can help you! I have a short attention span despite the technology, so books are literally my best friend when I need to sit still and calm down. Reading forces you to focus on one thing entirely, and with enough reading, you can see an improvement in yourself in terms of being more tranquil, focused, attentive and less fidgety.

4

Increased Emotional Intelligence and Empathy – The New York Times reported on a study that found "people performed better on tests measuring empathy, social perception and emotional intelligence" after reading literary fiction. These are skills that help us to read body language in others. They also found that one's tendency to become absorbed in a story was positively correlated with empathy." Now, living in a society that, to some extent, lacks empathy- we could all do well by picking up a good book!

5

Increased Brain Activity – Really, reading just prepares your brain everyday for everything to come. Quite honestly, it can bring immense change to your life and it will be evident every step of the way. Readers improve their general knowledge, and more importantly are able to spot patterns quicker. The best school in the world, according to me, is a library. You can learn of different cultures, different emotions in different situations, you can learn so much about human behaviour- and most of all, you can learn so much about yourself!

As an adult, I admit, it can be hard to find time to read- but we live in a that has blessed us with copious amount of traffic congestion- so why not pick up a book and spend that the time by reading? And if you still aren't convinced, remember the one thing we can hold to be true; books are indeed the chicken-soup for the soul! And when you've found your favourite book- do let us know! ■



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