**10 Reasons to Help Our Kids Love Reading**

1. Kids have to love reading to become excellent readers. Only if they love reading will they spend time reading. Practice is everything.

2. Avid readers acquire a more complex sense of language. They speak better, write better, and deal better with complex ideas.

3. Reading gives children wide-ranging frames of reference, which make all learning easier. Even children who read only fiction will pick up facts about history, geography, politics and science.

4. By high school, only avid readers will have the literacy skills to excel in any course that demands a good deal of reading—in other words, in any top-level English, foreign language, history or science course. They are the kids in the honors classes, the kids who score high on the SAT exam, the kids who have a shot at attending top colleges.

5. Excellent reading skills make it more likely kids will weather personal trauma with their academic credentials intact, since they will be able to keep up with their schoolwork by using only a fraction of their time and emotional energy. In contrast, a personal crisis will usually wipe out a poor reader.

6. Avid reading gives kids a sense of perspective. After seeing life described through the eyes of hundreds of different narrators, they see that there are many ways to look at situations; there are many sides to most issues.

7. Reading helps children to be compassionate. The essence of compassion is the ability to understand another’s viewpoint. Reading brings children into thousands of different lives, allowing them to understand these lives in all their complexity. In television sitcoms, problems are solved with a snappy line in half an hour.

8. Avid readers are exposed to a world full of possibilities and opportunities. Maybe they’ll read a Michael Crichton thriller and want to become a scientist. Mark Berent’s Air Force stories might spark an interest in flying jets. No matter how limited the world in which children live, with reading they can go anywhere. They can dream anything.

9. Avid reading develops critical thinking skills. Rather than hearing information only in sound bits, avid readers learn to follow complex arguments and remember multifaceted plots.

10. A love of reading is one of the major joys of life. Huddled in a deep chair by the fire with a terrifying thriller; lounging on the beach, laughing at a comic novel; falling asleep over a gentle romance. Without these pleasures, life is a little darker and drabber.

Leonhardt, Mary. *99 Ways to Get Kids to Love Reading and 100 Books They’ll Love.* Three Rivers Press, 1997.

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