

Script – Broadcast – Read a book, improve your health

INTRO

Whether you're curled up on the couch engrossed in an autobiography or tucked away in bed late at night with a good mystery, experts say there's little doubt that reading is good for our health.

Research shows 75% of adults participate in some form of reading. However, according to another study, the number of children between the ages of 9 and 13 reading for fun has dropped in the last decade.

According to Ashley Pratt, a psychotherapist with OSF HealthCare, most people need just six minutes of reading time a day to see some health benefits, especially for children. And that's good information to have this time of the year as kids head back into the classroom.

(((SOT)))

Ashley Pratt, psychotherapist, OSF HealthCare

"It's one of the best things we can do for our mental health and our physical health. It's been shown to greatly reduce our stress levels, lower our blood pressure, improve our memory and cognition, and it improves our sleep quality." (:13)

VO

Pratt says reading fiction tends to be the most helpful when it comes to increasing skills such as empathy and our ability to learn and understand people. She adds that reading has been shown to increase resiliency and an ability to handle difficult emotions as readers learn about characters and the challenges they face.

Reading is also an escape. Readers can get lost in a story and go to places and see things they might not otherwise experience. Pratt says: it allows us time to be away from the things that are causing us stress, the things we ruminate on, or things that cause us to be stuck in a depressive or anxious mind and the ability to go somewhere else for a while in a healthy way. And then we can come back.

TAG

While it's easy to simply read from the comforts of home, reading is a hobby that connects us with the outside world. There are social opportunities through libraries, bookstores, book clubs and online forums.

If you simply don't like to read, no worries. Pratt explains there are other ways to reap the benefits of reading. She suggests starting small by reading a few pages or chapters once a day. Or listen to an audiobook while you're doing chores around the house or exercising or driving.

So, whether it's a few pages with your morning coffee to start your day or several chapters before bedtime, Pratt says go for it. In this fast-paced world we live in, who couldn't use a healthy escape to help unwind?