



by Robert M. Kinney and Tara L. Kinney

[Dr. Seuss](#) said “the more that you read, the more things that you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you will go.” He believed that reading is fundamental to a child’s development and we believe reading is also fundamental to an adult’s personal and professional development too. This article supplies the context, purpose, and six simple steps needed to start and sustain a personalized reading program that gets results.

### **The Slow Death of Reading**

Today’s professional working adult is always on the clock and always connected to a multitude of work, family, and social media contacts. Finding time to read may be challenging, especially if you do not naturally enjoy it. Well intended internet searches can lead to mindless hours of cell phone scrolling, which may leave us unfulfilled and behind schedule. Physically slowing down to read a book can seem like an unnecessarily and punishing waste of time in a fast-paced, interconnected world where everything knowable is

a finger swipe away.

As modern technologies increase the [availability of information](#), you may find yourself immersed in a tailored experience designed to deliberately keep you engaged beyond your [intended purpose](#). While there is nothing wrong with looking for and finding information on your device, the responses are devoid of context and condensed to fit your screen. Surface level transactions deny us the ability to connect with the subject matter, turn information into knowledge, or cultivate lasting personal growth. When was the last time you had a transformational experience on your phone? Our pursuits for immediate gratification are keeping us isolated and in a technological haze.

### **Transformative Potential: Reflect and Act.**

If reading a map can help us physically arrive at the right place, then reading a relevant book should help us arrive prepared and ready to act at our intended destination. Without reflecting on where we are versus our desired future, we invite a perpetual cycle of shortsighted behaviors leading us down the path of least resistance. Furthermore, when the environment changes and external motivators disappear, [an intrinsic action must sustain the advancement of education or self-improvement](#). If all behavior is functional, [we must engage with material that promotes tangible actions](#) with clearly defined improvements that reinforce our intrinsic reasoning for changing our schedules and applying efforts. We all have blind spots in our personal and professional lives. If you are lucky enough to have an organization, mentor, or support network naming these shortcomings, you owe it to them and to yourself to act. [Consider the source, reflect on the feedback, and act](#). Even when the right people are not physically available to help us chart a new course, we can transcend space and time by picking up a book and learning from people from diverse locations, backgrounds, and times. When you couple purpose and commitment with priority and resources (time and space), success is inevitable.

By clearly defining your 'why' and your desired end state, you can visualize success and appropriately measure your progress against a clock, a calendar, or a career while managing expectations along the way. Unfortunately, reading a book takes time and the process lacks the immediate gratification of social media. Therefore, we must [purposefully design](#) a positively reinforcing environment free from the trappings of procrastination and distraction. We must harness an internal set of motives that seeks learning, applicability, growth, and commitment. We must acknowledge our individual worth and provide ourselves a realistic action plan tailored to our current conditions.

## **Make it Work: Results based Actions.**

[Adults learn](#) through action, experience, and problem solving by connecting the present to the past and the future. Learning does not happen by accident, which means sustained habitual learning requires a deliberate and disciplined approach despite changing and adverse conditions. Continuous learning through reading is dependent upon tangibly relating the material to your personal interests, wants, and needs. [Supporting your new goals can transition a short-term external mandate into an internal and enduring source of sustained momentum](#). Coupled with reflection and self-awareness, a personal reading program can be transformational and serve as a building block for growth, improvement, and transformation (the more you know, the more you can know).

As we mature, institutional and social pressures fade, leaving us to rely increasingly more on ourselves. It [all starts](#) with a choice, followed by a plan, fueled by a commitment, actioned, and supported by the environment that we also shape. The time we invest into reading allows the material to simmer as we reflect on connections to events and ideas that we had never previously considered. The interconnected and potentially profound ideas strung together from a multitude of diverse books supplies a depth of insight that you could never replicate with a skim. Delayed gratification feels inefficient, but transformational growth takes time.

## **Six (6) Simple Steps to Start Reading Again**

- **Admit that your phone or tablet is stealing time from you (Determine your worth).**
  - Add up all your screen time and think about the opportunity cost.
  - Decide that you can do something better to better yourself.
- **Pick six (6) topics or categories that interest you (Diversify your shelves).**
  - Select clashing and challenging topics to make unlikely connections.
  - Create a multitude of options to stay engaged.
- **Gather the Books. Pair them up and keep them close (Maintain options on the go).**
  - Pick six (6) books at once and keep watch for delivery (anticipation).

- Place two (2) at work, two (2) in your house, and two (2) in your car.
- **Take notes on a bookmark (Create something tangible and shareable)**
- Write on index cards (notes in margins disappear with a turn of every page).
- Consolidating insights may unlock new connections and ideas.
- Seeing your own notes reinforces and improves recall of “A-ha” moments.
- **Flex page goals to fit time available (Routinely achieve realistic goals).**
- Untether yourself from chapters or sections (chart your own course)
- Use a second index card to mark your page count goal (see the goal marked).
- Adjust the goal in real time to fit conditions (time available, interest, or mood).
- **Tell a friend and commit to action (Share your notes and talk it out).**
- Create accountability and start movement (not a book club).
- Share your notes and transform “A-ha” moments into action.
- Give away the books, keep the notes, get more books, keep on learning.

### **Closing Thoughts**

Reading is hard to start and easy to quit, especially when conditions have not been set to enable, encourage, and sustain your efforts. Startup costs can seem high and the return on investment can seem low, but how you spend your time today will define who you become tomorrow. To overcome short term obstacles, we must define our ideal self, name the gaps, and surround ourselves with the right tools (personally chosen books to develop our weaknesses and keep our strengths sharp)[\[10\]](#). If we can create positive mechanisms to fill our human desire for immediate gratification, the spark to change might catch fire and stay lit. Using your bookmark notes for tangible application and quick recall may help you engage your social networks and reinforce knowledge in action. We all need time and space to learn and grow; we must be patient with ourselves. The first step is deciding that you are worth it, and the choice is yours.

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