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# MOTIVATE

## Editorial Note:

It is with great pleasure that we release the second issue of our Newsletter 'Motivate'. Thank you for giving us such wonderful feedback on our inaugural issue. With that kind of support behind us, it is indeed motivating to put together this issue for all of you. From the first issue, you may be aware that each month, we choose a theme on which the entire issue is based on. This issue's theme is 'Be Calm and Read Books', in celebration of World Book Day on 23<sup>rd</sup> April. As a self-confessed bibliophile, it gives me immense pleasure to put together an issue which centres around the importance of books in one's life.

It is important to note that when I say reading books, I am not limiting it to classical literature on the one hand or coffee table books on the other hand. It means, any kind of learning that happens through written material. As someone who has personally benefitted immeasurably

through my reading, I wanted to draw the attention on how so many of our attitudes and behaviour can be impacted by what we see and hear and do. We gain our understanding of the world and make judgements based on those attitudes so it is important to ensure that we have the best ones. This is especially important during childhood when one's cognitive foundations are being built. If it is ensured that the right attitudes are developed at this time, it will tide over till adulthood as well. One way to ensure this development of the right attitudes is through the reading of the right materials.

So this issue will take us forward in understanding the importance and benefits of reading as such. It highlights on the reasons as to how reading can shape a person psychologically which in turn affects our behaviours and emotions.

## Thinker's Corner:

Bibliotherapy has been integral to my work as a therapist. In bibliotherapy, we use all forms of literature viz. poems, novels, stories, quotes, plays etc. to bring about therapeutic changes in clients. It is a myth that bibliotherapy is only to do with reading. An essential component of bibliotherapy is also writing. Bibliotherapy is as much about creating literature as it is about using existing literature.

Of all the expressive therapies, bibliotherapy has always been my favourite- first, of course, for my own love for reading and writing. But importantly, because of the wide range of advantages it offers in a therapeutic setting. Reading and writing are therapeutic by themselves; Imagine incorporating literature to counselling and psychotherapy, that's therapy twice over. Consider this example. A client is unable to grieve for the loss of his best friend, but as he reads a novel suggested by his therapist, finds a character going through a similar loss. The client is weeping for the tragic loss experienced by the character in the novel, but in the process connects with his own grief. This way, many clients experience catharsis of an emotion otherwise denied or suppressed. But what is important is that the therapist must choose the right literature, provide safe space, and must do an in-depth processing of client's psychological status before, during and after the client has read the suggested material. Consider another example. A therapist asks a client to write an ode to his own personal

achievements. Here, we are not using existing literature, but encouraging the client to create one. The theme, style, characterization the client chooses to use and emphasize in the poem could provide a very useful insight regarding the subjective world of the client. Similar to the ones mentioned above, there are hundreds of bibliotherapeutic techniques that a therapist could be using. Prior to engaging the client in an activity, the therapist must have assessed the nature of the problem, and personality of the client. Later, it is equally important to understand how the client is relating to the characters and the plot in the story. Some clients may have a voyeuristic response, some may have a vicarious response, while some may have a visceral reaction to the characters and the plot. What is important is also to understand if this is the way the client relates to stories of others in their real life and then process it for therapeutic impact.

First, there is reading and writing for the simple joy and pleasure of it. This we may have all experienced. Then there is 'therapeutic' reading and writing that one could engage in to distract oneself from something that's bothering them in our life. And finally there is bibliotherapy- which with the assistance of a practicing therapist, books can become guides and can help clients connect with their emotions, feel less alone, gain newer insights, learn to use imagination, and possibly construct a better life.

Ms. Ashwini NV is the Founder-Director of Muktha Foundation- an Initiative to prevent abuse and promote mental health. She works with institutions to provide training in regard to abuse, its manifestation and its prevalence. She is also a psychological counsellor who uses multiple forms of therapy. She is pursuing her Doctoral degree at Jain University currently.



## Youth Talk:

Reading didn't come easy to me. In my school, we had a library hour. And the library was a haven. This magical land in the basement that you enter through a spiral staircase lead by Mowgli and Snow White and the Seven Dwarves painted on the side wall. This library hour was a time I came to look forward to each week. But this was much later. When I was younger, in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade, I was very scared of reading. The thought of reading made me nervous because I had a slight stutter. Words would mostly frighten me. I could read, but I could read only with great difficulty. My friends had moved on to reading Meg Cabot and the like by the 3rd grade while I was still struggling to read Dr. Seuss and Grimm's fairy tales.

It frustrated me only a little because reading slowly meant reading well for me. It meant I had the time to encounter each word and image the page had to offer. I could invest myself into the character and escape the world for just a bit. I knew that everyone experienced a book but I was okay with the fact that my experience was slower. I could talk to The Cat in the Hat as if he were my friend and he was! I could laugh at the Lorax with all my heart. I was lagging behind but I wasn't trudging along. Eventually, I found ways to deal with the stutter. By the 4th grade, I started finding solace in

the Dictionary. I would write five new words each day along with their meaning into my blue notebook. My mother made me do this because she thought that knowing the meaning of words would help me be less intimidating. By now I was picking up books by Ruskin Bond and Enid Blyton. This meant that there were no pictures and a cluster of words on the page would yet again unnerve me. But I started slow.

I read a page. Sometimes I had to re-read it. I noted down words I couldn't read or didn't understand. While the process was slow, I wouldn't have it any other way. I moved on to read Nancy Drew and The Hardy Boys. And when I was in the 5th grade, I was introduced to the magical world of Harry Potter. I started when I was 11 and I still believe that those books had a great impact on me today. You see, Dr. Seuss, Ruskin Bond and JK Rowling gave me something I never imagined I needed- the 'Power of Visualisation and Imagination.' Somehow when these words lifted off of a page and became a world of its own, it was less scary. To this day, I read slowly and I still wouldn't have it any other way. To this day, books are an escape from the world and the rat race but in that escape, they also help me find more. I don't believe you find books, books find you!

Ms. Deeksha Suresh is currently pursuing her B.A degree from Mount Carmel College with the combination of Psychology, English Literature and Communication Studies. She is an Academic Associate at Training and Research Initiatives (TRI). Apart from her writing, her photography skills are also top-notch. Her proficiency of accurately analysing things is something that makes conversations with her so interesting.



## Brief Report:

- ❖ Dr. Deepti was invited to deliver the keynote address at T. John College on 28<sup>th</sup> March, 2018 on the theme 'Media and Psychology in a conference conducted by Department of Languages.
- ❖ Dr. Deepti developed and conducted a Needs Analysis survey for High and Middle School teachers at Vidyaniketan Public School, on various issues encountered by them at school.

## Ramblings:

'Unnao' and 'Kathua' seems to be the two words echoing around me wherever I look these days. One would think that it would be enough that there is enough fear, anger, paranoia and suspicion going around to add communal feelings into the mix. I also think we have exhausted all our anger right now to even come up with coherent thoughts regarding these incidents. But why is it that we are always reacting to incidents and making plans regarding this only after critical incidents like this? I don't only mean incidents of abuse such as this but also other episodes of violence that we are seeing around the world, so much of which is perpetrated by kids who should be in school learning their fundamentals yet and not know anything regarding guns and cuss words. We have all heard of the age old adage 'Prevention is Better than Cure.' We even believe in this! So why is it that this is not being applied to the current scenario?

We seem to spend so much time arguing which side of the coin one represents that we seem to forget that there exists a middle path to the whole argument, which, if taken would help resolve so many conflicts. One of the first things which comes with conflict is the fact that one believes in being either inferior or superior to the other and this kind of perception imbalances the power in the relationship as such. I acknowledge that most conflicts are not that easy and are complex and multi-layered. But pulling away all these layers and coming down to the bare bones of problem will definitely reveal this. This is what gives one the power to assert and dominate over others and wilfully ignore their rights. I do not even have to elucidate on the result of these dominations across the centuries.

Again to reiterate, I do not believe that all conflict can be avoided if one believes in

equality. Then again, I do believe in the power of being egalitarian in my mind set. From personal experience, I know that the moment I stopped believing in the extreme perceptions and learned to take a more open path, it has definitely made my life easier. It has made me assertive by nature. I believe in the value of others' opinions but do not allow them to make decisions for me. When one is egalitarian, they believe in the value of everyone around them regardless of age, gender, class, caste, race and so on. This I believe can make a fundamental difference in the way we treat people.

To bring this topic into context, it is important to also understand how and where people can develop this kind of an attitude. For me, it was through extensive reading. This helped shaped the person I am today and definitely responsible for the ideals I hold very dear to me. It didn't matter what genre of books I read, each one was responsible in helping me become the person I am today. Be it magazines, be it fantasy fiction and be it children's books, there is always a learning that happens and this contributes overall to the kind of person one develops into. This learning is not always overt and can manifest years later. But it is important all the same.

Now people around are emphasizing on the criticalness of the right type of rearing we should give to our future generations. I do believe that this type of upbringing should involve practices which will develop the right attitudes among the children and shape the adults and their behaviours in the future. So go forth and learn the valuable but misinterpreted lesson of considering everyone equal and important!

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**"It is what you read when you don't have to that determines what you will be when you can't help it."**

**— Oscar Wilde**

## Mind Workout:

As a psychologist and a researcher, I've learned to take information as valid only when I can see some studies that give evidence to it. It is due to this and my habit of making observations that I completely acknowledge with the benefits of having a reading habit as listed below-

1. ***Improves levels of awareness-*** Any book you pick up helps you understand, learn and generally bring your attention to something that is important
2. ***Known to reduce stress and depression-*** In the previous article by Ms. Ashwini NV, it was seen how books can be used as a source of therapy.
3. ***Diverts the mind to positivity-*** Even when you read a book with a sad ending, there is a measure of catharsis that is achieved which goes some way in terms of making you feel positive as well.
4. ***Increases confidence and the ability to cope with difficult situations-*** With the fact that it increases awareness, there is also a level of confidence that comes along with it and this in turn results in the ability to effectively deal with any kind of difficult situation that arises.
5. ***Increases empathy-*** Several studies have shown a definite increase in terms of how empathy levels increase with the reading of books where the reader usually identifies with one character and starts empathizing with them through the book.



So there are all of the above and much more reasons as to why it is important to develop a reading habit. The next question arises as to how to make it a habit as such. There are several steps that can be followed to help make it into a habit-

1. ***Centralize Reading Time-*** Start with having a fixed time schedule in your day to include reading.
2. ***Make a public commitment-*** Use the power of Social Media to help declare your intention of developing a reading habit. Use Goodreads and other similar platforms to aid you along the way.
3. ***Find Curated Reading Lists-*** With the billions of books coming out each year, it is important to find reading lists that fit our interests. Use social media to find out what books your role models are reading and give them a try.
4. ***Don't feel guilty when you quit a book-*** Change your mind set to state that the book you quit was given up to make more time to read the next one you love.
5. ***Budget for Books-*** It is completely understandable that books are very expensive to buy sometimes. There are definitely roundabouts to this- second hand shops, circulating libraries, borrowing it and so on. Plan a monthly budget for how much you are willing to spend on books and plan on it.

(Sourced from <https://hbr.org/2017/02/8-ways-to-read-a-lot-more-books-this-year> and <https://content.wisestep.com/reading-important-adults-students-children/> )

## Fun and Funny:

It is important to see that we are honest with ourselves since this learning gives us an opportunity to correct our behaviour to a large extent. Here is one activity which can help us in this regard. All you need is to print out this layout, tokens and a pair of dice and you can get going on this!

### Name 3 things

<b>START</b>	1 ... that make you happy.	2 ... that make you sad.	3 ... you would like to have, but can't afford.	4 ... you would never buy, even if you had the money.	
6 ... you can't buy with money.	<b>MISS A TURN</b>	8 ... you buy with your pocket money.	9 ... you would like to get for your birthday.	10 ... you can do in a park.	
11 ... you can do in winter.	12 ... you can do in summer.	13 ... you would never do.	14 ... radical sports you would like to try.		
15 ... you would like to do, but your mother doesn't let you.		17 ... excuses why you didn't do homework.	18 ... you hope will happen in the future.	19 ... you are afraid of.	
20 ... countries you would like to visit.	<b>GO FORWARD 2 SQUARES</b>	22 ... that make a great holiday.	23 ... you like about others.	24 ... you like about you.	
25 ... you hate about others.		27 ... you don't like about you.	28 ...unusual pets.	<b>GO BACK 3 SQUARES</b>	
30 ... your parents would never give you.	31 ... unusual jobs.	<b>MISS A TURN</b>	33 ... you don't have the courage to do.	34 ... you shouldn't do at school.	35 ... you like to do on weekends.
36 ... presents that you liked most.	37 ... presents that you didn't like at all.	38 ... you like about English.		39 ... you don't like about English.	
<b>GO BACK 3 SQUARES</b>	42 ...why you would like to be a celebrity.	43 ...why you wouldn't like to be a celebrity.	44 ... to annoy a teacher.	45 ... for not wanting to be a teacher.	<b>FINISH</b>



We would love to hear your opinion about this issue and theme. Do write to us at

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