

How to Benefit from Reading an Article

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Do you ever read an article and then decide to share it with a colleague or friend? I love it when people offer beneficial articles to me! It communicates that they were thinking of me and care about my growth.

Maybe they think I will enjoy the subject matter, finding it stimulating and enlightening. They may want to confirm (or confront) some perspective we've recently explored together.

Whatever the reason, I'm always grateful when someone says, "Hey, I think you might find this article interesting." For similar reasons, I frequently present constructive articles to people I know and respect.

Since I've been publishing (and archiving) articles for twelve years, I have addressed many topics. I often share with my clients an article that I think is relevant to the topic we've recently discussed.

I have a huge appreciation for the value of paradigm shifts. Occasionally, they come from personal discovery. Sometimes they come from instruction, communicated verbally or through reading.

Many opportunities for paradigm shifts pass by undetected. That's because we are so comfortable accepting our current understanding of the world. It's particularly sad, however, when you miss an insight despite a friend specifically sharing some written instruction that could enhance your perceptions!

This article explores how to expand your awareness from the guidance available to you in an article.

Start by examining the title. Skim the article quickly, looking for its main points. Your purpose is to discover how this article might relate to something that is of some importance to you.

If a friend provided the article, imagine why he or she shared it with you. Presuming the motive was honorable, prepare yourself to look for insights you can both reflect back to your friend and pass along to other colleagues. Expect to enjoy the educational journey.

Assume the author is speaking directly to you. As you would an in-person instructor, ask questions of the article. Seek your own answers (since the instructor is not available), not only in the context of the article, but especially in the context of your life (currently and what might happen in the future).

Work to distill the concepts, making them your own. Imagine yourself recalling the principles and insights later. As a leader, you should always be preparing to expand the awareness of those you influence.

Making a hard copy of the article allows you to underline, circle, and otherwise highlight main ideas. Use the margins to make notes that translate the generic concepts into meaningful suggestions for you.

Making notes requires thinking about the content, keeping you conscious and aware. Your notes will help you translate the article into meaningful changes in your attitudes, outlooks, and behaviors.

When you finish the article, step back from the specifics and ask yourself, "So what?" How are you different because of what you read? How does the article enhance your existing strengths, and how can it help you overcome your limitations? How will your thoughts and future behaviors be different?

Now consider others who might benefit from the article. What concepts will you pass along to support and empower him or her? What context will you provide when you speak to the person or compose a cover note? What points do you hope will engage that individual? Imagine that person excitedly reporting to you the insights he or she gains from reading what you've shared.

Finally, think about connecting back to the person who gave you the article. How did you benefit from the gift? How will you be different for having studied the article? Imagine that your comments will enable additional conversation and mutual insights, further enhancing the relationship with your friend.

None of us knows everything. Yet there is plenty of information "out there" to support everyone's growth. Abundantly share what you learn with people who want to improve their knowledge and skill. This is one of those circumstances where you truly gain more by giving away what you have obtained!