**When You Start To Read More, These 10 Things Will Happen**I have a confession. I’m an addict.

It’s almost a lifelong thing, really. Since I was a kid. I should be embarrassed… but I’m not.

I should get help… but I won’t.

I’ll just go back to the bookstore. Back to the library. Back to my endless queue of ebooks. Back to my stuffed shelves.

They know me. They love me. I’ve got everything I need here. Why would I stop?

And why wouldn’t you start? When you read more, life expands. Here’s how.

## 1. You will find a safe way to escape when your own life is depressing, overwhelming, or just boring.

No need to turn to drugs or alcohol. Save your money. Get a library card, or start downloading some of those thousands of ebooks in the public domain. Get wrapped up in a story. Get lost in another world. Get into a character’s head and out of your own.

It’s instant. It’s economical. It’s portable: your own personal escape route when things get to be too much.

And who’s going to look down on you for reading a book? You smart thing, you. I won’t tell them what’s really going on. Promise.

## 2. You find out that you have a family.

Okay, I know. You have parents and maybe siblings, and maybe a whole slew of aunts and uncles and cousins and grandparents and whatnot.

Or maybe not.

Maybe you do feel alone in the world, bereft.

Whether you’re a literal orphan or you simply feel like you totally don’t fit into the family you’ve got, becoming an avid reader is a way to find the family you can fit into.

It’s a worldwide, totally open, and really awesome family.

It’s the family of readers. Book lovers. Literary addicts. Bibliophiles. Become one of us, and you have an extended family that you can find anywhere. There’s a signal, of course, like a secret family handshake. Just pull out that latest book and read it. That’s all it takes.

We’ll see you.

We’ll know.

We’re always nearby, whenever you need us.

## 3. You will become part of a timeless, global conversation.

Books are the way that the past communicates with us. And books are the way that we communicate across cultures and national boundaries, across social lines and class divisions.

Books let us enter into each other’s lives and worlds in a completely unobtrusive but immersive way.

Yeah, it’s pretty awesome.

Have you ever wanted to be someone else, to go somewhere else, to experience some other life than the one you got?

Books, baby. What are you waiting for?

## 4. You will learn to talk pretty.

Reading is the most painless way to improve your vocabulary, spelling, and grammatical proficiency.

Did you catch how I just spelled “proficiency” without even looking it up?

Yeah. That comes from reading.

Read more, and you’ll be able to snicker smugly when your friends post status updates with egregious spelling errors. You can correct their misuse of common words. You can be the Grammatical Tyrant you’ve always dreamed of being.

## 5. You will look forward to lines, layovers, and waiting rooms.

This could be the biggest turning point of your life, actually. Instead of tapping your foot impatiently, huffing and sighing like dyspeptic cow, or otherwise displaying your wrath and frustration in a socially acceptable way, you can simply… read.

Whatever book you’re currently lost in should be with you, in your pocket or purse. Pull it out and you’ve got entertainment, companionship, and intellectual stimulation. All in one handy portable package.

My friend Leigh says that reading gives her “the ability to be happy anytime, anywhere, even when waiting ridiculously long amounts of time.”

That’s a superpower everybody needs.

## 6. You will be a nicer person.

You might not care about being a nicer person, but the other people in your life probably do care.

Reading, as my friend Christine put it, “allows me to experience another’s emotions, which in turn makes me more sensitive to those around me.”

And she’s right.

Maybe you’ve never been a victim of racism, abuse, or poverty. Maybe you don’t know what unrequited love feels like. Maybe you find it easier to criticize than to sympathize.

Reading won’t take that away entirely (my Criticize-O-Meter is still in good working order, even after decades as an avid reader) but it will help you to slow down a little bit on the judging.

And speed up a lot on the empathizing.

Because when you live other lives through books, you begin to see the other lives happening in the world around you. The lives you know nothing about.

And you begin to have a little more understanding. A little more interest. A little less “us versus them” and a lot more “we’re all in this together.”

## 7. You will learn stuff.

Even if all you read is fiction, you can learn quite a lot about cultural influence, relationships, history, fear, human psychology, the various expressions of spirituality, the effects of war, the way robots will definitely take over the world, and how superheroes manage to keep their capes clean.

All very useful information.

Want more? Branch out into non-fiction. Biographies, history, current events. No, just kidding; skip the books on current events. Read history instead; you’ll learn more about current events that way.

Philosophy. Psychology. How-to books. Memoirs. Science. Exploration. If you’re interested in it, you can find a book about it. Probably you can find an entire section of books about it.

And hey, if you can’t find a book about it, maybe you should write one.

## 8. You will discover that you were dumber than you knew.

In the time prior to your avid reading addiction (also known as “The Years Which Must Not Be Named”), you thought you had a pretty open mind, didn’t you?

Go ahead, you can admit it. I won’t laugh.

You thought that you knew kind of a lot, and that you had a broad perspective on life, and a pretty accurate view on the world and how things worked.

And then you started reading.

Maybe the first few books weren’t such a big deal. They probably kept you safely in your comfort zone. But then one of the members of your new reading family gave you a recommendation.

“You’ve got to read this,” she said. “It’s so great. Really.”

So you did.

And you realized that something you thought you knew—really knew, truly and certainly—was not right at all. You felt the edges along your mind begin to crack open a little bit.

You felt a little light seeping in and you started seeing the interior of your mind the way it really was: dim, dusty, and crowded with a lot of assumptions.

You kept reading, and the more you read, the more those cracks opened up. One by one, those assumptions slipped and slid out of the cracks. The light grew. The air cleared.

You started populating your mind with different things: images, conversations, perceptions, insights, data. Poetry. Fragments of lives you didn’t live, but somehow experienced through a book. Emotions that didn’t belong to you, but that you felt just as strongly.

Real things, from the real world, instead of that crumbly old stack of assumptions and expectations.

## 9. You will be more creative.

As you fill your mind with fresh material from all these books, something wonderful starts happening.

Your mind wakes up.

Creativity is really all about making connections. The creative people in life, the ones we admire for their ingenuity, are the ones who can make those connections really well. They have a broad database of knowledge, and they don’t bother keeping the categories separate. They let poetry seep into science. They let faith and history hang out together.

They understand, in fact, that all those categorizations are imposed. We put labels on things so that we can feel like we understand them, but sometimes the labels are counterproductive.  
Reading helps you tear the labels off.

Reading helps you to fill your mind from as many sources as you want, and then let all of that beautiful stuff mingle and mix in anyway it wants.

## 10. You will become more imaginative and less afraid of being weird.

When you read books that are the product of someone else’s imagination, you start to trust your own imagination, and use it.

What a great idea! Using that brain, in all of its crazy, unnerving, glorious potentiality.

Reading will help you do that. If you feel like your mind is strange, start reading. After a few runs through the world of surrealism or science fiction (or surrealistic science fiction), you will feel like the most normal person in the world. Who are these crazy people who come up with these weird, fantastical ideas?

Of course, you’ll want to read more. So you will. And then your own imagination will start to blend what you’ve read with the real life you’re living, and you’ll add in your own unique collection of information, experience, education, and personality. Who knows what will result?

Don’t you want to find out?

Why don’t you have a book open yet?