# **Reading to Escape the News**

### Why am I addicted to listening to the news; can I kick this habit?

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[1](https://femmefuturescooperative.substack.com/p/reading-to-escape-the-news/comments)

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Hi there,

My habit since college has been to wake up and put on a news podcast. At this point, I have two Trump presidencies, one pandemic, two genocide events, and at least four election cycles firmly under my belt. Now more than ever, this practice of consistent news consumption isn’t even close to being a good idea.



artist unknown

Here’s the thing: I like knowing what is going on in the world, despite that seeming to be a form of masochism these days. It feels like I am bettering myself. To know the news is to be worldly and to cast off ignorance. (Truthfully, it also makes me feel like “*that girl*”and *she* gets out of bed and goes to work every day.)

This morning, I opened my trusty podcast app and scrolled to the “new episodes” section to peruse the latest from my favorite shows. I clicked on *absolutely* *none* of them, turned my phone off, and stuck it back under my pillow. Nope, nope, nope. I grabbed my phone again, yanked the covers off, and scrolled back to those podcasts. I clicked on the newest one and climbed out of bed to start my day.

I half listened while I made myself coffee and oatmeal, catching headlines. All things being equal, today was not a totally gut-wrenching news day. That podcast ended and slipped into the next, this one focusing on all of the federal workers who have been let go in the last two weeks, whether they work for the Environmental Protection Agency or the Veteran’s Association or anything in between. I couldn’t make it through more than five minutes before my anxiety spiked so badly that I had to turn it off.

*[Quick aside: if you are one of the people who has been impacted by these cuts, do not hesitate to reach out. I may come across an opportunity for work that could be interesting to you or be able to connect you to people in my network!]*

As I was falling asleep last night, it occurred to me that I could listen to a book instead of the news first thing in the morning. I don’t know why I hadn’t thought of this before. Perhaps it is because I am an avid romance and fantasy reader, and that isn’t always what I want to hear first thing in the morning. Too graphic. I am a Libby fan, and often scroll through the audiobooks available to borrow now to fill my time. Could listening to nonfiction serve my purposes? One way to find out.

Flash forward to this morning. In my podcast-induced panic, I opened Libby, typed in “nonfiction,” and looked for something that would be available right now. That is how I started listening to Tim Ferris’s *The Four-Hour Work Week*, first published in 2007.

As someone who writes about work, how could I not engage this critical piece of literature? My boyfriend’s review feels like an apt place to begin:

“I think he makes good points, but also has a delivery style that makes it seem a little snake oil like.”

While I am only 20% of the way into this book, his review seems apt.

I am dying to know your thoughts if you have read it or if you want to read along with me. I will wait until I finish this book to give it a full digest here.



by @[Hessah.\_.art](https://www.instagram.com/hessah._.art/)

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Back to the point: does listening to nonfiction audio (1) replace the anxiety-inducing news cycle and (2) make me a better person?

The second question is easy. Engaging with new ideas will always make you a better person. This book, in particular, is engaging my critical thinking and creative impulse.

The first question is harder. I started dabbling in news consumption in 2015 along with the first Trump candidacy. At that point, I was an American emigrant living in Asia. I felt so disconnected from this country that was changing so much while I was away. Listening to American news prepared me to have the conversations I was forced to have as an impromptu ambassador for America’s bad choices.

After returning to the US for college, I kept listening. I listened through his first presidency while studying government, anthropology, economics, and history. Listening to the news was literally homework.

I kept listening to the news after college, though, having developed a habit, but also a genuine curiosity about what was going on in the world that I didn’t engage with on a daily basis. If a war broke out in Ukraine or Gaza, I wanted to know about it. Is this habit and curiosity the only reason that I continue to listen to the news? If so, habits can be broken (just ask the dust-covered container of floss on my bathroom counter), and curiosity can be fostered in other ways.

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Genuinely, I don’t know. I want to see if this choice of listening to a nonfiction book instead of the news every morning works. I want to see if it sticks.

If any of you are in the same place as me, maybe you can try it alongside me. Email me your thoughts, what you are reading, and how you are coping with this vicious news cycle.

All the best,

Zoe