

MY CHILD HATES READING

by Brian Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

I will never forget my daughter's statement that summed up her attitude towards reading. "It hurts my brain when I read!" Now, I felt pain in my brain when I had meningitis at the age of 30. Was she talking about that sort of pain? Was it her way of saying it takes an effort to read and I don't want to put that sort of energy into it? Did it physically hurt? Only she could now answer that question, but it was a major effort to get her to read. We even went to the optometrist to have her eyes tested to see if her vision was impeded by a stigmatism or some other factor. She received glasses, but that didn't change her attitude towards reading. The glasses were put aside.

We did all the right things when she was young like reading to her regularly and trying to give her a love of books. As educators and parents that were totally involved in their children's education this was a disappointment. What I learned was that our daughter hadn't found a book that had really turned her on. Amazingly she passed her bachelor's degree with honors only receiving two B's in her whole university career. What a miracle. It wasn't until she started reading the Twilight Series books in the last couple of years that she started to avidly read for pleasure.

What we have learned is the absolute importance of reading to your babies and to follow this through every day until your children are old enough to read for pleasure on their own. Secondly, let them read whatever, so long as it is positive and healthy for them. Encourage them to read easy books. School and public libraries have many high-interest, low ability books that they are happy to point you towards. When you find your child reading without being asked, make sure you praise him. Catch him doing something positive and seize the moment!

Some parents allow their child to make the choice whether they read or not. It is important to inform them that they will have a reading schedule and that they are not old enough to make the choice not to read. Protect the reading period your child has chosen and ensure that the TV is off so there are no distractions or competing attractions.

Explain the reasons why reading is necessary and the impact it will make in their life. All school subjects, including mathematics, cannot be understood without a high level of proficiency in reading. Let your child set up their own reading schedule and tell you the things they are most passionate about. Making your child read is not ideal, but in the end you must be firm and require them to do it. The pre-requisite? Make it fun! If you get too heavy with this it will drive your child further away from reading and they will become resentful.

Your child might say that she wants to try gymnastics. Now, if you are going to pay for her to join a club you are going to expect her to practice. You are

not going to waste your hard-earned dollars for her not to put in a great effort and learn some important skills. It should be the same with reading.

Your child should be able to catch you reading at times. Be prepared to be a good model. Have good books around the house that you may have taken out of the library, rather than buying expensive books that may not be read. Let her help you cook. Ask her to read the recipe to you as you mix the ingredients. Be tough on the mistreatment of books, but most of all emphasize the pleasure of reading. Don't get into nagging your child about this.

If you have a Christian family you will want to ensure your child can read well so they can study the Bible and 'hide God's word in their hearts'. The greater thirst a child has for reading the fuller will be their understanding and the more interesting they will be as a person. Be in contact with your child's teacher or school counselor if your child is having problems with his reading. It's your right and your duty.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.