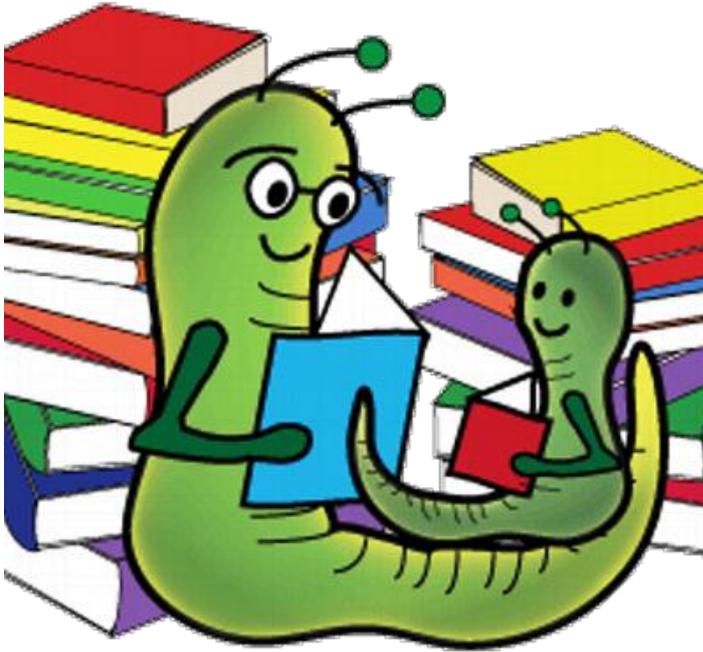


BOOK WORMS OR BRAIN WORMS?



Dementia affects abilities of memory, communication, processing of information that forms the thoughts and behavior. Reading is an enjoyable and powerful learning process that trains the brain. Reading involves imagination, imagery, memory, idea formation and switching from concept to concept while at other times one needs to link the ideas together to continue reading. One can empathize, sympathize, and feel revolted all during the process of reading. And each of these actions needs and uses a different part of the brain.

Therefore reading probably keeps

several parts of the brain active and exercises these areas if one is a regular and ardent reader. It is, therefore, not a passive activity and is a rather stimulating activity. It keeps one mentally aware including realms that may not necessarily involve the immediate surroundings and conditions.

Lifelong reading has long term benefits as well, especially in the younger and the elderly population. This habit leads to better processing of the information and helps interpret the social cues better in the real world environment. While the advantages of reading in the younger population are obvious, even in the elderly, it helps retain the mental abilities and plasticity. Not only is the memory loss found to be less in these patients, but the brains of such elderly people were found to have lower levels of changes related to dementia.

Even people who have started to have symptoms of dementia can read. They may have difficulty in remembering what they read, and the choice of books may change gradually, but they would enjoy the process of reading, or being read to anyways. Reading aloud in groups in a warm, well lit, comfortable room for a comfortable span of time is a good and recommended activity.

While completed evidence is tested in relatively few people (given the increasing screen time and decreasing book stores), this is a habit that does not have any disadvantage. Reading to grandchildren may be a good activity for both, the grandchildren as well as the grandparents. Reading has been noted to have memory benefits in the elderly. And in the younger generation, it has been found that children who are in the habit of reading are more likely to achieve and complete higher education. So grab a book. Now!

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