

Lifelong Learning



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Michelangelo, Eleanor Roosevelt and Gandhi—not to mention countless devoted classroom teachers—have encouraged a love for learning and of the ongoing growth of individuals. In *Learn or Die*, by Edward Hess the theory given for lifelong learning is increasing globalization and rapidly evolving technologies. Hess goes on to say that individuals and organizations must maximize their ability to learn, since learning is the foundation for continuous improvement, operational excellence and innovation. These are rather intellectual reasons for being a life long learning. The basic fact is, however, that lifelong learning is important to personal well being a self -satisfaction. The more we learn, the more we know. Knowledge gives us power and the ability to make better decisions, communications and choices for our lifestyles and ourselves. In order to function effectively day-to-day amidst a rapidly changing world, we need to learn new things. Whether learning to use a new phone, a new app or a new process at work or home, building skills is a constant in an ever-changing world.

The concept of lifelong learning includes the development of perseverance. It is a growth mindset and a belief that we can all continue to learn and grow throughout our lives. Pursuing passions and interests outside of work-skills is important since we live in an era where you can fix pretty much anything in your home by watching an online video. “Anytime, anywhere learning” has created a DIY culture that allows people to learn what they want to know more about at their own pace at any time. Research tells us that in order to truly empathize with others, increase social awareness and build relationships, we must intentionally seek out ideas that differ from our own. This is critical not only to the health of individual relationships, but also to the health of society. We’ve all heard the stories of people who have actively learned their entire lives living longer. Lifelong learning is one of the best ways for seniors to stay healthy. An active mind throughout life helps individuals live longer and healthier.

Types of Lifelong Learning - While there is a wide range of reasons to engage in lifelong learning, there are also many types of learning.

- **Formal** - Formal lifelong learning often takes place as part of a scheduled and monitored sequence of learning such as high school or college courses. This type of learning is usually traditional classroom style learning.
- **Self-directed** - When students have control over the path and pace of learning it may be known as self-directed. Examples of this in lifelong learning may include online courses that can be taken when your schedule permits. This may also include YouTube workshops that are sequenced but self-paced.
- **Professional** - One of the most common types of lifelong learning happens at work through professional development, job training or skill acquisition, and it is usually tied to career passion. Learning on the job, both formally and informally, is a primary way of lifelong learning. Some companies like Google and Microsoft allow employees to spend up to 20% of their week on projects and interests that are not directly related to their current role. This type of learning ties together professional and personal lifelong learning.

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- **Personal** - This type of lifelong learning is usually done outside of the workplace, and is often tied to a passion or interest. Individuals may pursue this learning informally or formally.
- **Indirectly** - Some lifelong learning happens without you even planning or knowing about it. Through conversations, unexpected lessons learned, relationships or travel, the world around you may expose you to new ideas and learning than you had even planned for. It is important to be open to these experiences.
- **Informal**. At the opposite end of the spectrum from formal learning is informal learning. Individuals may choose to learn through reading, watching YouTube, from a peer, or by trial and error. The ways to learn informally today are endless and exciting.

Resources - Regardless of where you want to start or what type of learning you'd like to engage in, the sources for supporting learning are limitless. Here are a few places to get started:

- ✓ Daily life (community, kids, work, etc.)
- ✓ The people around you—ask questions. All the time.
- ✓ Places (museums, parks, nature, literally anywhere)
- ✓ Internet (you can access pretty much anything through a Google search)
- ✓ Literature and books
- ✓ Online classes and videos such as Lynda.com, YouTube
- ✓ Universities and Community Colleges
- ✓ Apprenticeships and internships
- ✓ Certification and training programs

Tips to Get Started –

- ✓ Become open to the possibilities around you
- ✓ Increase awareness about what is of interest to you and keep a running list as a reminder
- ✓ Start small and build from there
- ✓ Don't be afraid to fail
- ✓ Read more
- ✓ Listen to a [series of TED Talks](#)
- ✓ Ask more, speak less

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