

An Aversion to Learning

Thesis Sentence: Rather than taking every opportunity to further their minds by learning new things, some people waste these times building themselves up.

I. Existing ideas are hard to change

A. Comparing old and new ideas

1. Seeing ideas as inferior
2. Seeing people as inferior

B. Ideas introduced at childhood

1. Parental influence
 - a. Child abuse
 - b. Broken homes
2. School and church influence
3. Societal influence

C. Ideas remain static

1. Common thought changes
2. People reject change

II. New ideas threaten

A. Enjoyment of lifestyle

1. Smoking

- a. Many aware of dangers

- b. Many ignore facts

- B. Ego protection

1. Saving face

2. Being superior

3. Proving a point

- a. Smoking

- b. Drinking

- III. Influencing people with ideas

- A. Converting others

1. Classroom example

- B. Politicians

1. Using repetition

2. Using every platform

- C. Advertisers

1. Slogans and logos

2. Convincing consumers

An Aversion to Learning

From the point where life begins and the first thoughts race across developing minds, we grow smarter from the experiences of each passing day. However, some people reach a point in life where they regard themselves as being intelligent enough to stop learning and, instead, do everything possible to keep new ideas far away from their fragile minds. So rather than taking every opportunity to further their minds by learning new things, these people waste those times building themselves up.

Learning something new is often harder than it should be. Even people who want to learn have to compare their existing ideas with conflicting new thoughts. But individuals with no desire to learn never do such comparisons because they see new ideas as being inferior and unworthy of consideration. This is especially common with people who are biased against others because of their age, race, gender, or nationality. If another person is "inferior" then certainly their ideas are too, so new idea is often shut out simply because of who or where it came from.

Opinions and ideas introduced at an early age are the ones most often protected from the influence of outside thought. These are generally ideas passed on from parents or other family members, because children imitate what they see. An adult's morality and ideas of how to behave are generally inherited from their parents, which is why child abuse victims often turn into child abusers and people raised in broken homes tend to divorce more often than those who are not. Environments such as schools or churches also make a significant contribution to childhood ideas, usually in the way a person deals

with other people. In the absence of strong family, religious, or educational influence, society can contribute heavily to these childhood ideas through peer pressure and the media.

Ideas set at an early age are most commonly religious and political in nature. Those existing thoughts are the hardest to change and will often remain valid in the mind of someone who does not learn, even if the world changes around him. My own grandfather has consistently voted for candidates from the Democratic Party for his entire life, regardless of a particular candidate's positions, simply because his father always voted for that political group. One could argue that the average Democratic political candidate has nothing in common with the ones from eighty years ago, but that has no meaning to him because the existing idea supersedes all argument and logical explanation.

Others resist new ideas because updated thought endangers their current lifestyle. Nearly everyone knows a person who continues to engage in dangerous activity even after it is proven unsafe. Tobacco companies make billions of dollars every year from this line of thought. With public service commercials about the dangers of smoking during most television programs and warning labels on every pack of cigarettes sold for the last twenty-five years, there are very few smokers left who have not been exposed to information about the dangers of their habit. But they choose to ignore the warnings or regard the information as untrue because doing otherwise would endanger their decision to smoke.

Often, the enjoyment of a particular lifestyle is not the sole reason for refusing to learn. Protecting a fragile ego sometimes has a role as well. Admitting wrong ideas damages the psyches of certain sensitive individuals, so those ideas are embraced just to "save face" and keep up appearances. Someone replacing an idea of her own with another's idea would be the equivalent of admitting she is less intelligent than someone else. That directly conflicts with her feelings of superiority over other people. Smoking could be an example for this too, with someone who refuses to give up the habit just to

prove a point. Alcoholics also fit into this category, as thousands of people drink themselves to death because doing so is easier than admitting to a problem and seeking help for it.

People who refuse to learn often try to influence others with their unbending ideas. By voicing an opinion every time the opportunity arises, such people hope to "convert" others to think like they do or impress people with their vast knowledge on a particular subject. Almost every college class has at least one student who would rather use class time to show their knowledge of a subject or convince others of a particular viewpoint instead of actually learning. Political figures apparently believe in this method, repeating their messages in public until people believe them or get sick of the message. Advertisers use this technique too, blasting slogans and logos onto every available empty space so consumers will be convinced to purchase their products.

Individuals who refuse to learn often do so knowingly to shield themselves from change or a damaged ego, to convince others of their intelligence, or simply to convince others of their intelligence. But, in doing so they prevent themselves from growing as humans and are deprived from one of life's greatest joys: learning through new experiences.