
In Praise of Boredom



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Monotony can ignite creativity, giving rise to new adventures and fresh beginnings.

People who possess everything – the ultra-wealthy “kings” among us – are often the most prone to boredom. In an attempt to break free from their ennui, they indulge in luxurious homes, yachts, planes, extensive art collections and sprawling vineyards. But the allure of each of these distractions seems to be fleeting. Despite their opulent surroundings, they remain unfulfilled. Their wealth attracts shallow friends and beautiful companions, but the void within persists.

Their predicament is not unique. While traditionally associated with the social elite or the leisure class, boredom is a challenge that transcends wealth. It's a universal experience, a signal that we're falling short of our full potential.

Boredom invites us to **take action**, much like other negative emotions such as hate, disgust, envy, anger and sadness. It nudges us to break free from inner stagnation and engage in new experiences. However, to harness its potential, we must first understand it.

The way we experience and perceive boredom is shaped by the society and culture in which we live. A few hundred years ago, tasks that we now take for granted would have taken a long time to complete. Now, with technological advances and a culture of immediacy, our attention span is diminishing. Our minds need to work much harder to find activities to keep us busy.

Boredom arises when we are disinterested in our current activities or when we feel like doing nothing. In this mental state, we find ourselves in a “twilight zone” between action and inaction, experiencing conflicting desires to do something while also feeling disinclined to do anything at all.

Boredom’s dark undercurrents

When boredom sets in, we may find it challenging to identify our desires and determine where to direct our energy. Instead, we are left with a sense of emptiness. We become impassive, fatigued, nervous and jittery.

This combination of lethargy and restlessness distinguishes boredom from feelings like apathy. When we’re bored, we recognise that whatever we’re doing is no longer stimulating, yet often have a desire to change the present situation and search for alternatives. In contrast, apathy is characterised by a complete absence of desire, a lack of motivation and a failure to seek alternatives.

People go to great lengths to prevent boredom. Those who experience chronic boredom **face a heightened risk** of drug addiction, alcoholism, compulsive gambling, eating disorders, difficulty controlling anger and poor performance at work or school.

It is cause for concern when boredom is accompanied by behavioural manifestations such as reduced energy, unintended weight loss or sleep disturbances. Such patterns may be interpreted as attempts to cope with a despondent mental state, indicating a lack of internal resources for self-care. Chronic boredom might also signify more significant mental health issues.

The upside of boredom

While chronic boredom signals that something is very wrong, episodic boredom serves as a call to action. Experiencing this feeling can help people realise that whatever they are doing isn't giving them sufficient satisfaction and that they are no longer fully present and engaged.

In a sense, we can view boredom as a desire for novelty and a precursor to a period of imagination and creativity. In fact, the most creative ideas always tend to emerge after a patch of boredom. Our brains likely require a certain period of boredom – of being stuck – to be creative once again.

The challenge lies in how to use our boredom to our advantage. Experiencing boredom is one thing, but choosing to stay bored is within our control. And while there is no miracle cure, there are numerous actions we can take to break free from this state.

Dig deep to find what invigorates you

Like with any psychological issue, understanding what's happening to us is the first step in overcoming it. Reframe feelings of boredom as an opportunity to explore your inner life. Instead of relying on external stimuli and superficial solutions to soothe feelings of boredom, explore your inner resources to figure out what makes you feel alive.

Many bored individuals lack a profound understanding of themselves and have not embarked on a journey of deep self-exploration, possibly due to the fear of what they might discover. As a result, they tend to prefer external distractions.

But it is possible to take advantage of this mental state to become more reflective and aware of issues in our lives that need attention. Boredom can act as a catalyst to help us discern what gives us energy and purpose, as well as what it would take to create meaning in our life.

To fully understand the source of boredom, accurately monitor your mood states. Being aware of our emotional fluctuations can reveal interesting patterns. It can help us understand who we really are, what stimulates our

mind and what keeps us engaged. A reflective mind serves as a highly effective antidote against boredom.

Rediscover a sense of belonging and fulfilment

In our search for a renewed source of engagement and motivation, we may discover that we have been neglecting two important sources of meaning: a sense of belonging and of transcendence. Feelings of loneliness often underlie boredom. A lack of intimate relationships should be a stimulus to improve our social bonds by reconnecting with friends and family members or seeking new interactions with others.

Moreover, being bored tells us that we need to find fresh ways to rejuvenate our senses through introducing new activities into our professional and personal lives. Beyond quelling boredom, integrating into different communities – be it by exploring a new career path, embarking on a new learning journey or even pursuing new hobbies – can allow us to experience a greater sense of belonging.

Another important “remedy” for boredom is engaging in activities that transcend the self – endeavours that go beyond our narrow personal interests but prove to be extremely enriching. For example, community-oriented, humanitarian or philanthropic pursuits can all provide a sense of **deep satisfaction**.

When boredom significantly impacts your quality of life, and you experience feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, sadness, irritability, avoidance of interpersonal relations and self-blame, it is wise to seek support. A psychotherapist, coach or another helping professional could be of great assistance to help you understand your state of mind, as well as rediscover your purpose and passion in life.

Boredom should not only be perceived as a negative phenomenon. It should be regarded as a warning sign that our present way of living is no longer fulfilling. It is a call to search for new journeys and new beginnings.

By taking the initiative to deepen self-awareness and understand what ignites our sense of vitality, we become better equipped to address the

enigma of boredom. Feelings of monotony can be used to our advantage, leading us to discover ways to engage with the world more consciously and to establish more meaningful connections with others.

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