

## The Benefits of Boredom

The summer months are a time when many of us take a break from the hustle and bustle of work, school, activities and other commitments. But often we find that when we unplug from our frantic schedules, we're faced with an equally unpleasant experience ... **boredom**. What is boredom? Boredom is the collection of unpleasant feelings that comes with lack of stimulation. It is the frustrating state of wanting to be entertained, but being unable to engage in a satisfying activity.

In today's world where kids are overscheduled and constantly plugged into devices, there is a real threat that unstructured summer days will cause a lot of children to utter the dreaded phrase "I'm bored". For adults too, boredom is something we avoid, and sometimes even fear. But researchers have pointed out that being bored has a lot of benefits:

- **When we're bored, we daydream.** Studies show that daydreaming when we're bored often leads to "autobiographical planning", which is when we plan our daily activities and future goals. When our minds wander and we're not thinking about what's going on around us, we are more likely to think about the future.
- **Boredom is essential to creativity.** Researchers have found that passive, so-called "boring" activities, such as reading or attending meetings at work, can lead to more creativity. That's because being bored can promote daydreaming, which allows us to make new, innovative ideas and connections.
- **Boredom inspires us to have fun.** Boredom is both a warning that we are not doing what we want to be doing and a motivator for us to pursue activities that we do enjoy. In the absence of boredom, we might remain in unfulfilling situations, and miss out on many emotionally, cognitively, and socially rewarding experiences.



- **Boredom helps us get sufficient rest.** When we're constantly stimulated (even in with things that don't require physical exertion) we become exhausted. Your brain cells, just like any other cells in your body, become tired with overuse. Being bored allows our bodies and brains to rest and replenish for the next exciting activity.
- **Boredom makes us happier.** Nearly 100 years ago, philosopher Bertrand Russell mused that "A life too full of excitement is an exhausting life, in which continually stronger stimuli are needed to give the thrill that has come to be thought an essential part of pleasure." If we're constantly stimulated, the stimuli loses its impact. We need to be bored every now and then to truly appreciate the fun, engaging activities in our life.

For children, being bored has other important benefits: boredom helps children develop a sense of identity and independence. When kids are bored, they are forced to find something to do that they enjoy. Learning to fill up their spare time on their own helps children learn to take care of themselves and discover their own identity.

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