

The Benefits of Boredom
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As we enter our second year of the Pandemic, boredom is becoming an issue for many of us.

For a bored person, mental fatigue gets worse with the perception of a slower passage of time. So when you are bored while you are waiting for the end of the Pandemic, even 10 minutes can feel like an awful long time.

To escape from boredom, we seek ways of distraction, like a movie, a book or a video game. However, these short-term solutions can also strengthen the grip of boredom. It's like an addiction where we need more and more intense stimulation to fight boredom. And this may ultimately lead to even more boredom in the long run.

Boredom can be associated with self-control problems, including addiction, gambling, and binge-eating. Idle hands, as the Amish remind us, are the Devil's workshop.

However, boredom does have its benefits. Here are five to them.

1. Boredom can improve our mental health. In this age of information, our brains are overloaded with information and distractions. This however can lead to a scarcity of attention. So taking a break can be a valuable opportunity to help our overloaded brains relax and alleviate stress. It is actually beneficial to simply step away from social media and other stressors long enough to feel bored.

2. Boredom can increase creativity. Boredom can enable creativity and problem-solving by allowing the mind to wander and daydream. In one study (Mann, 2018), people were made to do boring tasks (e.g., reading reports or attending tedious meetings). The boring tasks encouraged their minds to wander, which led to creative ways of thinking. The study showed that with mundane activities we discover useful ideas. In the absence of external stimulation, we use our imagination and think in different ways.

3. Boredom motivates a search for novelty. Without boredom, humans would not have the taste for adventure and novelty-seeking that makes us

who we are—intelligent, curious, and constantly seeking out the next thing. Novelty seeking implies dissatisfaction with the status quo, and a willingness to challenge established ideas and practices. Great achievements are facilitated with dissatisfaction with the status quo. Perhaps Christopher Columbus would not have never have discovered America if Prozac was been available in those days.

4. Boredom motivates the pursuit of new goals. Boredom is an emotional signal that we are not doing what we want to be doing. Being bored means that we are currently engaged not only in an uninteresting or unchallenging situation but also in a situation that fails to meet our expectations and desires. Boredom encourages us to shift to goals and projects that are more fulfilling than the ones we're currently pursuing.

5. Boredom and self-control skills. Boredom can actually be a catalyst to learning how to develop various self-control skills, such as regulating our thoughts, emotions, and actions.

Given these benefits, perhaps we should occasionally embrace our boredom, rather than attempt to escape it. In fact, it's alright to allow our minds to wander sometimes, because boredom could be an opportunity for reflection on what we really want in life.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/science-choice/202004/5-benefits-boredom>