

Chapter 4

Boring Into the State of Boredom Through Age Groups: Types of Boredom and Strategies to Increase Motivation and Positive Life Outcomes

Bonnie A. Plummer
National University, USA

ABSTRACT

The research area regarding boredom has received increased import in the past several years owing to its relationship to risky and unhealthy behaviors. Boredom also has a profound effect on school aged children and adolescents along with the growing elder-hood population. From the boredom proneness scale (BPS), multiple studies have address everything from psychological correlates to boredom as avenue for creativity. This chapter reviews the research in this area including the types and causes of boredom and positive strategies to address trait and state boredom.

INTRODUCTION

How does it happen when we move from dynamic and interactive to a state of stasis and inertia? How does it happen, when we move from having a full fun-time calendar to one of being alone and hermit-like? How can this happen at all stages of life - childhood, school-hood, adulthood and elder-hood, regardless of the environment or activities? Is it a personal decision to be unable to find interest from things in the school, work or community environment? Is the individual unable to implement a decision making process to select from the possible options? Or is it an individual's inability to be motivated to engage that resides within one's self?

Humans begin life with a great curiosity during early childhood, filled with seeking new sights, exploring new relationships and finding new discoveries. Through this exploration of people and sights in the environment, the child builds a repertoire of images and memories for use throughout adulthood.

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Often as children enter school their engagement and natural excitement begins to wane as rules and requirements are introduced. Some continue on the path to exploration but others drift off. They begin to disengage and many prefer time alone in their bedroom to interacting with friends. They greet all suggestions and activities with, “I’m bored.” They choose to make the decision not to be engaged.

But boredom isn’t restricted to children or to school. Perhaps it begins when we are overwhelmed with families and jobs and don’t have the time or inclinations to go beyond the daily grind. The pace of work and raising children takes all the energy out of the room and the repetition of schedules can lead to a state of boredom.

This chapter will probe into the factors that create boredom, an emotion, which is the focus of current research. The discussion will examine the causes of boredom, types of boredom and begin to explore theories changing the silent emotion of boredom into one of engagement and attention. The relationship of boredom to the decision making process will be examined.

Definitions of boredom will be explored and the symptoms of boredom will be identified. Is boredom a state of mind or an uncontrolled choice to calm the world around us? Finally, strategies for reducing boredom for positive life outcomes will be considered.

The objectives of this paper are to: 1) develop a definition of boredom including trait and state boredom; 2) examine the health hazards of boredom; 3) review the types and causes of boredom; 4) review the self-assessment measures of boredom, and; 5) review strategies to increase engagement and motivation through decision making processes.

BACKGROUND

Whether we use the terms twiddling our thumbs or bored stiff or the idle rich, the terms implies a lack of interest and a lack of desire to pursue other interests. It suggests there is a lack of stimulation within the environment or the person is unable to move beyond the present situation/environment to find something of interest. They are disengaged from the present either internally or externally.

There are many theories about the origin of the concept of boredom and the antecedent of boredom. From the wall of ruins of Pompeian there is graffiti about boredom from the 1st century (Burton, 2014). While boredom is an emotion it is also classified as a phobia with an irrational fear for idleness. The term thaasophobia is used to describe this condition (Schuessleter, 2010).

With the advent on Christianity boredom was considered a sin. This sin however could be replaced by the virtue of joy. The introduction of this term in literature dates from around the 1700’s. Pinski (1980) writes regarding Soren Kierkegaard (1843) a Danish philosopher. At age 30 Kierkegaard, writing in *Either/Or: A Fragment of Life* defines boredom as:

How dreadful boredom is-how dreadfully boring: I know no stronger expression, not truer one for like is recognized only by like... I lie prostrate, inert; the only thing I see is emptiness, the only thing I move in is emptiness. I do not even suffer pain...I am dying death. And what could divert me? Well, if I managed to see a faithfulness...an enthusiasm...a faith that moved mountains;... (Popova, 2015, p.2)

He goes on to state boredom was a prequel to creation: “The gods were bored; therefore, they created human beings” (Thompson, 2017, p. 2).

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