

BOREDOM

Understanding of Boredom

Boredom is a distressing condition in which an individual feels a general lack of interest and inability to find engaging activities that he or she can pursue to yield meaning and pleasure in life. Understanding what boredom means for you personally is one of the most important steps towards eliminating its symptoms in your life. Although the experience of boredom can be different for different individuals, many times when an individual feels tired or restless or generally disinterested in hobbies or activities that he or she used to enjoy, they will identify these feelings as boredom.

Why is it important to understand boredom?

Boredom is rarely recognized as something of clinical significance. Many times people dismiss boredom as a minor condition that will just go away on its own. Sometimes the only advice given for overcoming boredom is telling the bored individual to “get a life” or “get over it”. However, it is important to check out whether someone is truly just temporarily or situationally bored, or if those feelings are more chronic and therefore really signs of some more significant emotional distress, such as depression.

Distinguishing between boredom and depression

According to the American Psychological Association, the signs of boredom are very similar to the symptoms of depression. These common symptoms may include changes in sleeping and eating patterns and loss of pleasure and purpose in life. For this reason, it is important to recognize and investigate when you are feeling bored and assess whether there may be more to it. Depression is a very serious, yet treatable, emotional condition with potentially life threatening consequences such as suicide. Interestingly, the two groups that are most apt to commit suicide are also the two groups most likely to describe themselves as “bored”. These groups are teenagers and senior citizens. This fact alone gives more meaning behind the phrase “bored to death”. If you think that your boredom may be depression it is important for you to check it out. In addition to depression and suicide, boredom can be a factor contributing to other problematic behaviors. These include addictions (drugs, alcohol, internet), crime, divorce, school failure, and decreased job productivity and its potential consequences such as decreased pay or termination. The staff at the Mississippi State University Counseling Center can assess your level of depression or involvement in these other areas and recommend and provide a treatment that will be most likely to be successful for you.

Ideas for eliminating boredom

If you have determined that you are indeed bored versus depressed or not functioning well in some other area aforementioned, then the following ideas may be of some use to you. One way to eliminate boredom in your life is to take inventory and make a list of the things you are interested in. If this specific listing not possible for you may want to consider making a global list to identify what kind of life you want to have. It is extremely important to set some goals for yourself that can lend meaning and purpose to your life by giving you something to strive for.

One way to think about this is in terms of immediate, short-term goals, long-term goals and self-improvement goals. An example of a long-term goal might be to get a certain job in a particular career field. A short-term goal might be to sign up for a required class in that career's field of study. A self-improvement goal might be to improve your study skills so that you get the most out of the class you take and do as well in it as possible. Identifying relevant goals can help you decide what you find personally meaningful and, from that, which activities will be most relevant to help you achieve your goals.

Another strategy that will help eliminate your boredom and also help your wider community is to look for ways in which you can participate actively in your community. You may think you live in a community that is too small to offer anything of interest to participate in, however if that is your case don't despair. In a small community they are more likely to welcome new ideas so you can plan and develop activities around the things that you find intrinsically of interest and be pleasantly surprised to find that others probably share your interest as well.

Lastly, consider tapping into your own creative wellspring. Most teens and adults are quick to reply that they are not "creative", however this is not true. Creativity is your birthright as a human being and can be expressed in a multitude of ways. It is not possible that you are not creative, although it may certainly be possible that you are out of touch with your creativity. There are many resources in the library and on the internet that can help you find ways to tap into your unique creative potential. Try a new form music, movement, visual, or dramatic arts just to get you inspired. The journey will doubtless "cure" your boredom for the moment and beyond that the possibilities are limited only by your imagination!!

For more information call the Mississippi State University Counseling Center at 325-2091 and also check out www.nursezone.com.

This website also offers a publication entitled "Beating Boredom" that you can purchase directly for only \$4.95 for more ideas and inspirations!