

The cure for boredom

Do you ever feel bored? In this video, find out about the problem of boredom and a way to never be bored again!

Tasks

Do the preparation task first. Then watch the video and do the exercises. Remember you can read the transcript at any time.

Preparation task

Match the definitions (a–j) with the vocabulary (1–10).

Vocabulary

1. a gadget
2. boredom
3. a capacity
4. to encounter
5. to meditate
6. to distract yourself
7. to pay attention
8. contemplation
9. an inoculation
10. blissful

Definition

- a. feeling unhappy because something is uninteresting or because you have nothing to do
- b. to experience something, especially something bad
- c. a device or machine, for example a phone or tablet
- d. to stop thinking about a problem by keeping busy
- e. someone's ability to do a particular thing
- f. to become calm and relaxed by thinking about one thing
- g. to watch, listen to or think about something carefully or with interest
- h. extremely or completely happy
- i. serious and quiet thought for a period of time
- j. an injection that protects someone from a disease

Task 1

Write a number (1–6) to put the ideas in the order they are mentioned.

_____ Once you know how to meditate, you might still find that some activities are a waste of time.

_____ People avoid boredom by watching things, reading and communicating on their devices.

_____ But if you always distract yourself, you will never learn how to do nothing.

_____ People experience boredom less nowadays than they did in the past.

_____ When you meditate, you pay attention to your breathing and feelings.

_____ Learning to meditate will cure you of boredom – you will never be bored again.

Task 2

Write the activities in the correct group.

listening to a song	watching a film	paying attention to breathing	being interested in the feeling of boredom
paying attention to your experience	reading a book	finding a deep feeling of well-being	texting a friend

Distracting yourself from boredom	Meditation

Discussion

What do you usually do when you're bored? Have you ever tried meditation? Would you like to try it?

Transcript

I'm going to talk today about the problem of boredom. Now, it's true, we encounter boredom less and less, with all of our gadgets and with the totality of human knowledge and artistic output always available to us. When you can always hear your favourite song or watch a great film or read a great book or text a friend because you can do all of these things with the device that you have at your side 24 hours a day, you might successfully avoid boredom for the rest of your life. But you might also never discover what's on the other side of boredom. And you might not recognise the price you are paying for being compelled to distract yourself, for having lost or having simply never acquired a capacity for doing nothing. A productive capacity for doing.

Once you learn to meditate, you realise that boredom is simply a failure to pay attention. If something as simple and repetitive as breathing can become a source of blissful contemplation, and it can, and if the feeling of boredom itself can become an object of intense interest, and it can, there's no way to be bored, if you're paying close attention to your experience. So training in meditation is the true cure for boredom. It's a kind of permanent inoculation. Once you learn how to meditate, you will never be truly bored again. Now, this isn't to say that you won't still make choices in life. Certain activities might still feel like a waste of time, and they might be a waste of time, given all the other things you could do. So you might still walk out of a movie or stop reading a book because it's, quote, 'boring', but when left alone with yourself, how do you feel? Are you desperate to be distracted by some stimulus? Or can you find a deep feeling of well-being as an intrinsic property of just being conscious? The gulf between these two conditions is enormous and in my experience only meditation allows us to reliably span it.

Answers

Preparation task

1. c
2. a
3. e
4. b
5. f
6. d
7. g
8. i
9. j
10. h

Task 1

1. People experience boredom less nowadays than they did in the past.
2. People avoid boredom by watching things, reading and communicating on their devices.
3. But if you always distract yourself, you will never learn how to do nothing.
4. When you meditate, you pay attention to your breathing and feelings.
5. Learning to meditate will cure you of boredom – you will never be bored again.
6. Once you know how to meditate, you might still find that some activities are a waste of time.

Task 2

Distracting yourself from boredom	Meditation
listening to a song watching a film reading a book texting a friend	paying attention to breathing being interested in the feeling of boredom paying attention to your experience finding a deep feeling of well-being