

Mindfulness Worksheet - Working with Boredom

Distraction is readily available. Arguably, we are more susceptible to distraction now than in any other time in history. The problem with distraction is that it takes us away from the present moment, the only moment in which we're capable of realizing contentment and joy.

Why then, aren't we satisfied with remaining present? Why do our moments of peace, in which there's seemingly nothing to do, translate to boredom rather than joy?

If we're unaccustomed to mindfulness, it's easier to seek and chase the next distraction than it is to sit with the discomfort of boredom. Sitting with the discomfort of boredom, however, is exactly the work we need to do.

By turning towards boredom and taking an interest in it we begin to learn about ourselves and our minds. It's by exploring boredom that we become more mindful of our tendency to chase distraction, and how fruitless that grasping is.

Use the following brief meditation and exercise to reflect upon boredom and reclaim the moments of boredom in your life.

Meditating on Boredom

- Take a comfortable seat in a quiet place
- Set a timer for 5, 9, or 12 minutes
- Close your eyes and turn your attention inward towards breath
- As you settle into this moment of relative stillness and quiet, notice any discomfort
- Restlessness might appear as a quality of mind, or as a sensation in the body
- Stay joyfully focused on breath
- If you happen to notice discomfort, rather than turning away, turn towards it
- Take a deep interest in your feelings of boredom or restlessness
- Get curious about the feeling or sensation
- Notice if your boredom fades away by taking an interest in it
- And if so, return to the breath
- Repeat this process as many times as you need to, until your timer goes off

What Did You Notice?

- Describe your experience with the meditation in general
- When you've lost focus on your breath, do you think it's boredom, or something else?
- How might taking a greater interest in the breath help you hold your attention on the breath?
- How do you think mindfulness can help combat the discomfort of boredom?
- Describe the connection between boredom and distraction
- If you could build your capacity to hold attention, do you think you'd still struggle with boredom?
- When you're bored, is there something that you're avoiding?
- When you're bored, what is it that you're not noticing?
- When you're bored, which emotions are at play?
- Is it possible to experience awe and boredom at the same time?
- Is it possible to experience gratitude and boredom at the same time?
- What happened in the meditation when you turned towards your restlessness to face it directly?
- How do you habitually avoid boredom in your daily life?
- Have you ever had an experience in which you were forced to sit through boredom, without an available distraction, what happened?

Becoming Mindful of Boredom

As you go about your day, use mindfulness to **recognize boredom**. Notice for example when you fill space with unnecessary tasks, how often you mindlessly reach for your phone, or the times in which you fill silence by turning on the radio or television.

Become interested in your boredom. Instead of reacting to boredom by occupying yourself with mindless tasks, use boredom as a trigger to engage mindfulness. Ask yourself, what is it that is making me uncomfortable at this moment? What is it that I really truly need? The answers might arise as a feeling in your body, rather than a thought.

Challenge yourself to remain present with the discomfort of boredom. When we're bored, we've turned off the switch on noticing. Turn the mindfulness switch back on by getting curious. Close your eyes and notice at least three things about the present moment. This could be as simple as checking in with your breath, your body, or the energy within your mind.

Review

When we're bored, we're struggling against our present circumstance. We wish we were anywhere but here, we wish we were doing.

If we can recognize boredom and allow for it, we give boredom an opportunity to teach us. Boredom is one way in which our true nature is calling to us. Our true nature is one of contentment, happiness, spaciousness and ease. Boredom asks us to notice how we resist being at peace, we resist contentment and stillness.

With mindfulness, we can reverse our perspective on boredom and feel into it not as an uncomfortable sensation, but as a calling to relax, slow down and enjoy. Gratitude, awe and contentment are available to us in each and every moment.