

The big idea: should we embrace boredom?

Level 2: Intermediate

Article summary: This article examines the effect that smartphones have had on how we react to, and deal with, feelings of boredom.

Time: 60 minutes

Skills: Reading, Speaking, Writing

Language focus: Word forms

Materials needed: One copy of the worksheet per student

1. Warmer

- a. This activity aims to get students thinking about their own experiences of boredom and what they do when they feel bored.

2. Key words

- a. Ask students to work individually or in pairs to find the words in the wordpool in the article and then match the words to the definitions. Allow a few minutes for students to check answers in pairs or groups before checking answers with the whole class.

Key:

1. pressure
2. Distract
3. experiment
4. Absorb
5. alone
6. Concluded
7. Meaningless
8. opportunity
9. device
10. associated with
11. Evidence
12. form
13. adds up to
14. electric shock

- b. Ask students to work individually or in pairs to complete the sentences using words from the previous activity in the correct form. To extend the activity, ask students to tell you what hobbies are popular in your country or region and why these are good for relieving feelings of boredom.

Key:

1. electric shock
2. distract
3. concluded
4. experiment
5. adds up to
6. device
7. meaningless
8. opportunity
9. associated with
10. form
11. alone
12. evidence
13. absorb
14. pressure

3. Comprehension check

- a. Students can work individually or in pairs to do this activity. Encourage students to read out the section of the article where they found the answers to the questions and to correct any of the false statements.

Key:

1. False – Almost half of the people in the experiment pressed it.
2. False – This isn't always a bad thing. The author acknowledges it's not always harmful.
3. True – ... we become bored if something doesn't absorb our attention, or when we believe it to be meaningless.
4. True – ... the number of students in China and the US who described themselves as bored increased in the years after 2010, when smartphones became popular.
5. False – ... people who were bored at work were more likely to use their smartphones – and then felt even more bored.
6. True – That adds up to spending 17 years of your adult life online.

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4. Key language

- a. Students work individually to complete the table with forms of the words in bold. You may want to ask students to work in pairs to do the activity and to use an online or printed dictionary to find any of the forms they are unsure of.

Key:

1. *pain*
2. *painfully*
3. *mean*
4. *meaning*
5. *meaninglessly*
6. *meaningfully*
7. *develop*
8. *developmental*
9. *developmentally*
10. *reaction*
11. *reactive*
12. *reactively*
13. *bore*
14. *bored / boring*
15. *boring / bored*
16. *boringly*

- b. Ask students to work individually or in pairs to complete the sentences with the words in brackets in the correct form. To extend the activity, ask students to work in pairs to write example sentences of their own using the words in brackets or other forms of the words from the table in task a.

Key:

1. *painful*
2. *developed*
3. *boringly*
4. *reaction*
5. *meaningless*

5. Discussion

- a. Students discuss the questions in pairs or groups. Ask them to justify their opinions, referring to their own experiences whenever possible.

6. In your own words

- a. The aim of this task is to get students to work together to complete a class survey to find out how they cope with feelings of boredom. Ask students to write 6-8 survey questions of their own or, if they prefer, to use the questions that are provided. Then give them time to interview at least one or two other groups and to make notes of the answers. Students should then have time to analyse the data that they have found and to try and identify any patterns or findings. Finally, give each group time to present their findings to the rest of the class.