

The big idea: should we embrace boredom?

Level 1: Elementary

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. *adds up to*
2. *Evidence*
3. *experiment*
4. *depressed*
5. *alone*
6. *A waste of time*
7. *Meaningless*
8. *Psychologists*
9. *electric shock*
10. *increased*

- b. Ask students to work individually or in pairs to complete the sentences using words from the previous activity. 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. *increased*
2. *experiment*
3. *alone*
4. *evidence*
5. *a waste of time*
6. *depressed*
7. *electric shock*
8. *adds up to*
9. *psychologists*
10. *meaningless*

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 the false statements.

Key:

1. *False – ... they asked people to sit alone for 15 minutes.*
2. *False – Almost half of the people pressed the button.*
3. *True – ... we become bored when we believe something to be meaningless.*
4. *False – We often pick up our phones because we are bored, but that actually makes it worse.*
5. *True – ... the number of students in China and the US who described themselves as bored increased in the years after 2010.*
6. *False – The average American spends more than four hours a day on their smartphone ...*

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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. *emotional*
8. *emotionally*
9. *scientific*
10. *scientifically*
11. *bore*
12. *bored / boring*
13. *boring / bored*
14. *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. *means*
3. *bored*
4. *emotional*
5. *scientific*

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.