



Ascension

Ascension WI EAP

## The Gift of Boredom

Jennifer Miller Houtz, MA, LPC

Gift?! What?! Boredom is not a problem to be fixed. It is definitely not anyone's responsibility to fix for someone else (even parents). When someone says "I'm bored," they really mean "I'm not engaged," or "I don't like my options." It means they want attention, feel frustrated and don't know how to say it except, "I'm bored!" Consider boredom as a GIFT you can give your kids, and yourself.

**Don't rush to "fix" someone's boredom.** Why? Because you likely won't be successful. And if you are it will be short-lived, because restlessness will pop right back up. Rather, empathize, and resist the temptation to offer suggestions. In fact, celebrate it. "Good for you! You're bored and there's so many possibilities!" Get ready to tolerate some whining, frustration, and pushback.

**Being creative, self-sufficient, and sitting still are powerful life skills.** They must be learned. One has to experience the discomfort of boredom to feel the drive towards creativity, discovery, and self-direction. One very valuable life skill is to move yourself out of boredom!

**Encourage creativity.** Look for projects that you never have time for. Try a new hobby. Spend quality time with family members. Make your own fun. Just sit. With today's technology every

minute can be filled, but even with unlimited access we often feel restless.

**As we grow up, the time to just "be" and even "be bored," becomes harder and harder to come by.** Sometimes we fill our schedules so full it hardly feels like we can catch our breath. We even shame ourselves when we have too much down time or don't accomplish enough. In fact, we feel anxious when we have empty time or time alone. Being bored is an opportunity to take a breath, and a good excuse to take a deep one.

**Boredom shouldn't be avoided, but encouraged.** It is a chance for self-direction and creativity, for free thinking and for play. Endure the discomfort of being bored and rediscover your sense of wonder, creativity and playfulness. Boredom is one of the fading gifts of childhood; one that adults so rarely get to enjoy.

