

BOREDOM OVERVIEW

Kids often use boredom as an excuse for getting into trouble:

Why are kids on drugs? 'Because we are bored,' they say.

Why are kids so violent? 'Because we are bored,' they say.

But is this true?

Boredom is a major threat to adults who work with teenagers and parents who have to live with them. Whenever a teenager says that they are bored, an adult feels responsible to get them out of their boredom.

But is this what they want? Is it what they need?

DEFINITION

Boredom is described as feeling tired, weary, or heavy. Six components of boredom are

- * Fatigue.
- * Dissatisfaction.
- * Anxiety.
- * Uneasy body feelings.
- * Aggressiveness.
- * Irritability.

When asked, most young people (61%) say that boredom is the state of having nothing to do, no options, or being stuck someplace they would rather not be. Some (33%) would say that even though they knew of things to do, they are bored because they do not want to do any of them. The activities are either not exciting enough to put forth the effort or the teenagers are in a state of mind that they feel keeps them unmotivated about everything, and even depressed.

RESEARCH STATISTICS

Survey results of over 400 high school students in New England indicate that 9% say boredom is a real or serious problem in their lives, and 17% note they are somewhat or completely dissatisfied with their lives.

What is boring for teenagers?

- * 89% Said homework is "somewhat" or "very" boring.
- * 85% Said school itself is "somewhat" or "very" boring.
- * 79% Said church or synagogue is "somewhat" or "very" boring, but there are more strongly negative answers to this than to school.

What is not boring for teenagers?

* 85% Said, "friends."

* 83% Said, "music."

* 78% Said, "parties."

* 73% Said, "athletics."

How do they feel when they are bored?

* 77% Said, "tired."

* 63% Said, "lonely."

* 46% Said, "sad."

* 32% Said, "angry."

IMPLICATIONS

1. Although boredom is not a crisis for most teenagers, it is a regular occurrence in their lives. What do they think will alleviate boredom?

2. 34% Believe that it is the teenager's responsibility to resolve boredom when it occurs.

3. 33% Suggest that the community and schools are obliged to solve the problem for teenagers by supplying activities, a youth center, or parties.

4. 20% Say that if they had more freedom they would not be bored.

5. 5% Also asked for lower drinking ages and the legalization of drugs.

6. Opposing views deserve discussion among kids so that they can formulate their own reasoned opinions about who is responsible for overcoming boredom.

7. Young people feel forced into boredom by parents and school officials. It is important that they have free time and know how to make wise choices with it—without pressure from adults.

8. Parents and youth workers must determine and develop the interests of children, and must help them find ways to build their strengths and succeed. Also, healthy adventure and risk situations must be provided for youth so they can stretch, grow, and build self-confidence.

9. A key issue for parents and youth leaders is the importance of gradually turning over to youth the choices and responsibilities of how to constructively use free time.

Bob Atchinson cCYS