

Boredom research has now become more interesting

Date: November 18, 2013
Source: Springer

Being bored has just become a little more nuanced, with the addition of a fifth type of boredom by which to describe this emotion. The finding has been published in Springer's journal *Motivation and Emotion*. In cooperation with colleagues at the University of Munich, the University of Ulm, McGill University in Montreal, and the City University of New York, educational research by Dr. Thomas Goetz of the University of Konstanz and the Thurgau University of Teacher Education provides insight into how boredom is experienced in everyday life. The study is among the first to quantifiably investigate different types of boredom.

The study builds on preliminary research done by Goetz and colleague Anne Frenzel in 2006 in which they differentiated between four types of boredom according to the levels of arousal (ranging from calm to fidgety) and how positive or negative boredom is experienced (so-called valence). These were *indifferent boredom* (relaxed, withdrawn, indifferent), *calibrating boredom* (uncertain, receptive to change/distraction), *searching boredom* (restless, active pursuit of change/distraction) and *reactant boredom* (high reactant, motivated to leave a situation for specific alternatives).

The researchers have now identified another boredom subtype, namely *apathetic boredom*, an especially unpleasant form that resembles learned helplessness or depression. It is associated with low arousal levels and high levels of aversion. Goetz, Frenzel and a team of fellow researchers conducted two real-time experience studies over two weeks among 63 German university students and 80 German high school learners. Participants had to complete digital questionnaires through the course of a day on a Personal Digital Assistant device about their activities and experiences.

Because of the assumed link between boredom and depression, the research group found it alarming that apathetic boredom was reported relatively frequently by 36 percent of the high school students sampled.

The findings show that the five boredom types do not just depend on the intensity of the boredom being felt, but mainly on the real-life situation in which it is experienced. Another interesting realization is that people do not just randomly experience the different boredom types over time, but that they tend to experience one type.

"We therefore speculate that experiencing specific boredom types might, to some degree, be due to personality-specific dispositions," reports Goetz. Further, the results shed new light on discussions about whether boredom has positive or negative effects on learning and achievement. "This question can only be adequately answered if we know what type of boredom a student experiences," Goetz adds.

Story Source:

The above story is based on materials provided by Springer. Note: Materials may be edited for content and length.

Journal Reference:

1. Thomas Goetz, Anne C. Frenzel, Nathan C. Hall, Ulrike E. Nett, Reinhard Pekrun, Anastasiya A. Lipnevich. **Types of boredom: An experience sampling approach.** *Motivation and Emotion*, 2013; DOI: [10.1007/s11031-013-9385-y](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11031-013-9385-y)

Cite This Page:

MLA APA Chicago

Springer. "Boredom research has now become more interesting." ScienceDaily. ScienceDaily, 18 November 2013. <www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2013/11/131118103935.htm>.

Researchers identify new type of boredom

Feeling Helpless & Depressed? You Could Be Suffering From 5th Kind Of Ennui, Says Study

Berlin: Being bored just became interesting, with scientists identifying a new type of boredom to describe this emotion. Researchers identified the new type of tedium as 'apathetic boredom', an especially unpleasant form of the emotion that resembles learned helplessness or depression. The study is among the first to quantifiably investigate different types of boredom. The study builds on preliminary research done by Dr Thomas Goetz of the University of Konstanz and colleague Anne Frenzel in 2006 in which they differentiated between four types of boredom according to the levels of

THE BIG YAWN

Not all boredom is the same, says a new study
Experts already knew about 4 types of boredom

Indifferent boredom Relaxed, withdrawn, indifferent – typical couch potato boredom	Searching boredom Restless, active pursuit of change/distraction
Calibrating boredom Uncertain, receptive to change/distraction	Reactant boredom High reactant, motivated to leave a situation for specific alternatives

Now researchers have identified a fifth type

Apathetic boredom It's the most troublesome of all. People exhibiting apathetic boredom are withdrawn, avoid social contact, and are likely to suffer from depression

In the study, almost 40% of high school students reported apathetic boredom

arousal (ranging from calm to fidgety) and how positive or negative boredom is experienced (so-called valence). These were indifferent boredom (relaxed, withdrawn, indifferent), calibrating boredom (uncertain, receptive to change/distraction), searching boredom (restless, active pursuit of change/distraction) and reactant boredom (high reactant, motivated to leave a situation for specific alternatives).

The researchers have now identified another boredom subtype, namely apathetic boredom that resembles learned helplessness or depression. It is associated with low arousal levels and high levels of aversion. Goetz and researchers conducted two real-time experience studies over two weeks among 63 German university students and 80 German high school learners. Participants had to complete digital questionnaires through the course of a day on a Personal Digital Assistant device about their activities and experiences. Because of the assumed link between boredom and depression, the research group found it alarming that apathetic boredom was reported relatively frequently by 36% of the high school students sampled. The findings showed that the five boredom types do not just depend on the intensity of the boredom being felt, but mainly on the real-life situation in which it is experienced. Another interesting realization is that people do not just randomly experience the different boredom types over time, but that they tend to experience one type. "We therefore speculate that experiencing specific boredom types might, to some degree, be due to personality-specific dispositions," said Goetz. The study has been published in Springer's journal *Motivation and Emotion*.