



Is Boredom Bad for Your Child? Psychologist's Opinion

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"I'M BOOOOORED!"

The moment we hear these words, we spring into action, offering toys or suggesting fun activities. We feel a pang of guilt when a child is bored, treating it like an emergency to fix. But what if boredom is not a problem at all? What if, instead, it is a secret ingredient for a child's growth and well-being?

Child development experts believe that boredom is not harmful and is something that could help develop a child's creativity, emotional regulation, and independence when supported appropriately.

Why Do We Not Like Boredom?

In many homes, boredom is quickly swept away by screens, scheduled activities, or endless tasks. While these options have their place, leaning on them too much can quietly shrink a child's creativity and ability to handle their own feelings.

Parents often worry that when their child is bored, they are unhappy, unmotivated or headed towards misbehavior. This usually results in parents feeling pressured to keep their child busy.

Common Activities To Keep Children Busy

- **Screen time** - many children are given iPads or phones to keep them busy. This is the easiest way to alleviate boredom, which can make children and parents dependent on it. This often leads to difficult behavior when it is used excessively. Some parents set clear limits, such as 1 hour of iPad use, which can help create balance.
- **Enrichment activities** - I have students who attend a lot of enrichment activities (music or dance lessons, tutoring, sports lessons, or art lessons) so as not waste a day. A lot of parents use enrichment activities because they are productive and help build important skills. This is a great way to keep children busy, but it may reduce their creativity and imagination as it is too structured.
- **Academic tasks** - for children without tutoring lessons, parents usually give them worksheets like activity books, **learning worksheets**, or homework. While these strengthen their academic skills and are good to keep them advanced, too much academic pressure may lead to fatigue and stress in children.

Again, these activities are not bad and are valuable, but the issue arises when every time your child feels bored, it is solved immediately, leaving children with little room left for imagination and unstructured time.

What Is Boredom for Children?

Boredom could mean a lot of things for children; they might say it when they feel hungry, seek attention, are curious about something, or are in search of something to keep them occupied. We sometimes think that boredom is linked to unproductivity and unhappiness, so we try to give an immediate reaction or solution to this.

In my experience working with children who have very busy schedules, many enjoy their activities, but also express how they want to get some rest. Too many planned activities take away opportunities for children to learn how to cope with discomfort and manage

their own time, and boredom helps children understand rest and how we need to slow things down.

How Boredom Benefits Children



Creativity

Boredom can spark creativity. Children are more likely to imagine and explore more when they are experiencing boredom, and I often see this in the classroom as 5-year-olds get bored quite easily, especially when they already played with most of the toys, so we ask them to think of a fun game we could do as a class. When they are given fewer toys to play with, they are more likely to invent their own game or do imaginative play. We were children, too, and we used to fill our boredom by making our own fort at home or even using different non-toy materials to create something. The children today are also capable of being as creative as we all were as kids.

Mental recharging

Boredom helps with children's mental rest that improves their focus, learning capacity, and mental health. In school, even a short period of quiet time before we start our lessons helps children feel calmer and more ready to learn. Like adults, children also need time to slow down.

Self-regulation

Boredom actually gives children a chance to practice self-regulation as they learn to manage frustration and patience. A study found that boredom is linked to self-regulatory processes, which help them decide how to respond when they feel bored. Boredom supports children's emotional resilience. This teaches children that it could be uncomfortable, but it is tolerable.

Problem-solving

Feeling bored encourages children to problem-solve - thinking about what could entertain them. Letting them manage their boredom would support their problem-solving skills, as they wouldn't get an easy fix by getting what they want. Children's creativity shines through when they are not given a solution. You might be surprised by what they could come up with!

Healthy boredom

Healthy boredom means that your child's basic needs are met, they feel safe and supported, and an adult is emotionally available.

However, parents should look out for concerning signs, such as a lack of interest in any activity or signs of emotional distress. This might indicate something deeper than boredom and may require additional support.

Six Ways to Support Healthy Boredom

1. It is always best to explain to your child that boredom is normal and temporary and that we all experience it. Maybe you can ask them what they think they could do when they feel bored, or even brainstorm on what you could do together.
2. Do not give instant solutions like screen time or toys. As adults, we usually feel bad when a child feels bored with us, even me with my students! But again, it is normal. When you hear your child say, "I'm bored," wait a moment and give them time to think about what they could do next.
3. Make sure that toys like blocks and dress-up clothes that encourage imagination are readily available for your child to use. These toys help children be creative and help with their socio-emotional development as they engage in pretend play.
4. Create a list of activities with your child: it could be something that they already know or a new activity, and you can even add some challenging activities too, such

as finishing a puzzle, creating art, or even a LEGO project.

5. Encourage them to play outside, they could run or even play in the garden - but be ready for them to get dirty and messy! You can also make a condition that they need to help clean up afterwards, teaching them about responsibility, too.

6. Be there for your child: just be emotionally available when they need you.

When we allow children to feel bored in healthy ways, they are given an opportunity to be creative, independent, resilient, and confident.

It is not a sign of poor parenting, and sometimes the best thing to do is to trust our children and let them figure things out on their own.

Check out our website to find a wide selection of learning drills, worksheets, quizzes, videos, and much more! If you need to organize and track your child's learning lesson by lesson, our web-based Kids Academy Classroom could be just the right solution for you!

References

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