

## Bored on Purpose

### Reclaiming the Empty Moments You Keep Trying to Fill

*"Boredom is the dream bird that hatches the egg of experience."*

— Walter Benjamin

Boredom has developed a worse reputation than it deserves. For most of human history it was simply the quiet background of a life, the unremarkable space between one thing and the next. Now it appears and vanishes within a second, erased by a screen before it can settle, and something valuable has been quietly lost in that trade.

This report is not about doing more with your time or filling it more wisely. It is about the opposite: learning to sit inside empty time without flinching and to stop treating every idle moment as a gap that must be closed. What follows are nine practical ways to become comfortable with boredom again, so that your focus steadies, your creativity returns, and your ordinary days start to feel like enough.

### Tip 1: Rename the Feeling

Boredom is not an emergency, and treating it like one keeps you reaching for the nearest escape. It is closer to a signal that your attention is momentarily unoccupied and simply waiting for direction. The next time it arrives, name it plainly as ordinary boredom rather than something wrong to be fixed, and let it stay a passing state you can leave alone.

### Tip 2: Leave the Small Gaps Empty

The habit of filling every spare second is built one tiny gap at a time, in the seconds spent waiting in line, riding an elevator, or pausing between tasks. Each of those gaps is short and low in stakes, which makes them the ideal training ground for a

larger tolerance. Choose a few of them each day and deliberately leave them empty, letting yourself simply stand there and wait.

### **Tip 3: Let the Restlessness Rise and Pass**

When you stop filling a moment, a wave of restlessness usually follows, and it can feel surprisingly physical. That feeling is not a sign that anything is wrong; it is a nervous system used to constant stimulation meeting a moment without any. Rather than acting on it, watch it the way you watch weather, and notice how it crests within a minute or two and fades on its own.

### **Tip 4: Do One Thing at a Time**

Much of what we call boredom is the quiet letdown of an activity that offers only one stream of input at a time. Single-tasking feels slow at first because you have trained yourself to expect several things at once. Pick one ordinary activity each day, whether eating, walking, or washing dishes, and do only that with nothing playing in the background.

### **Tip 5: Put Empty Time on the Calendar**

Unstructured time rarely happens by accident anymore, so it helps to plan for it on purpose. Set aside a short window, even fifteen minutes, with no task, no screen, and no goal beyond letting the time stay open. Sit on a step, look out a window, or wander the block with no destination, and let the emptiness be the point rather than a problem.

### **Tip 6: Stay With the Boring Task**

Dull, repetitive chores are usually treated as things to rush through or distract yourself away from, yet they are a reliable way to practice staying present when nothing exciting is happening. The next time you fold laundry or tidy a room, do it without a podcast or video filling the silence, and give the task your full attention.

You will feel the pull toward escape, and each time you stay with it instead, that pull grows a little weaker.

### **Tip 7: Let Your Mind Wander**

An unoccupied mind is not an idle one, because left alone it drifts, connects, and quietly works on problems in the background. This wandering is where a great deal of creativity and insight comes from, which is why answers so often arrive in the shower or on a walk. Give yourself regular stretches with no input, let your thoughts go wherever they like, and treat the drifting as useful rather than wasted.

### **Tip 8: Turn Down the Stimulation**

When your baseline is set by fast, intense, endlessly novel input, ordinary life begins to feel flat and boredom arrives much faster. Lowering that baseline lets the quieter pleasures of an ordinary day register again. For a week, reduce your most stimulating inputs and let your senses recalibrate, and notice how moments that once felt boring begin to feel simply calm.

### **Tip 9: Give Boredom a Long Enough Runway**

The first stretch of any empty moment is almost always the hardest part, and most people give up right there. If you can stay past that initial discomfort, boredom often softens into something closer to rest, reflection, or unexpected interest. Give the feeling more time than you think it needs, and treat the early restlessness as the toll for entry rather than a reason to turn back.

## Key Insight

Boredom is not empty. It is the space where attention resets, creativity gathers, and ordinary life becomes vivid again. The goal is not to escape it faster but to stay long enough to receive what it offers. The empty moment was never the problem. It was always the opening.

## Fast Action Steps

Comfort with boredom grows through small, repeated practice rather than a single decision. These two steps give you a simple place to begin this week.

### Action 1: Sit With One Empty Moment

Choose one moment today when you would normally reach for a distraction, and let it stay empty instead. Notice what the restlessness feels like and how long it actually lasts. The aim is not to enjoy the moment but to prove to yourself that you can stay in it.

Which everyday moment will you leave empty, and what did you notice when you did?

### Action 2: Reclaim One Single-Tasked Activity

Pick one routine activity and commit to doing it with no background input for the next several days. Let it be as slow and unremarkable as it wants to be. Over a few repetitions, watch whether the urge to fill the silence begins to loosen its grip.

What activity will you single-task, and what pulls at you when the background noise is gone?

## Recommended Reading

These books explore boredom, stillness, and the quiet value of unstructured time.

Recommended reading:

- Bored and Brilliant by Manoush Zomorodi
- How to Do Nothing by Jenny Odell
- The Art of Stillness by Pico Iyer
- Rest by Alex Soojung-Kim Pang
- Do Nothing by Celeste Headlee
- Four Thousand Weeks by Oliver Burkeman
- Solitude by Anthony Storr

### Next Step

Pick one empty moment tomorrow and let it stay empty. That single unfilled pause is the whole practice in miniature, and every calm, unhurried moment you allow makes the next one easier to meet.