Bored with doing the same things day after day [1]

Dear Alice,

How could one live life doing the same things everyday for the rest of their being? Just repeating the same tasks over and over again and again. Seeing the same things day after day. Nothing new. Nothing exciting or enjoyable. I'm so incredibly bored that it is driving me insane. I could go get a job, but I've done that already. And if I do, then it will be going to work day after day. There are a lot of things that I could be doing, but I've done them all already. Is this normal? I'm only eighteen. What should I do?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Boredom is one of those emotions that, when we feel it, seems as though anything we do will make us feel even more bored, so that we're unable to see beyond it. If you're feeling bored, you're may be feeling a bit unmotivated, depressed, or defeated as well. In this kind of state, it's hard to rev up the ol' engines and look for a more exciting option. It's not unusual, though, at this crossroads in life (as the upper-teen years are for many people), to feel stuck, a bit scared, and maybe even a little blue as you consider the choices ahead of you.

That's what life is really about anyway: choices. While you describe yourself as feeling bored, what this might be hiding is a desire within you to try some new things, perhaps even take some risks and test your talents and interests. Maybe this is scary, or seems impossible within the context of your current living situation.

When you think about moving on into your next few years of life, what do you picture? What are the opportunities that seem available? Maybe the "adults" you know are in jobs where they don't feel challenged or creative, or you've felt that way in school or jobs yourself. While it certainly takes all kinds of jobs and workers and types of people to keep the world moving, perhaps you'd like to see yourself doing something really amazing. Indeed, there are lots of ways to both earn money and contribute to your own and others' well-being, while filling your days with varied responsibilities to avoid the doldrums. Many people struggle to figure out what kind of career is right for them, and how to get there. The strategies in I want a better job! [2] in Alice's Emotional Health archive may be helpful for you to consider.

If your current location has limited opportunities, you might also consider moving someplace else with more variety, openings, or that piques your interest. You could even try looking abroad. Of course, relocating and traveling cost money. If you're in school, your program likely
offers a number of resources to help you find creative and low-cost ways of exploring different locales and venues for learning. Try contacting your Career office, guidance counselor, or advisor. If you currently have a job, your company may have branches in other areas or be able to send you on assignments away from home. There are also organizations like the Peace Corps and Teach for America that are always looking for potential participants. You can easily find information about programs such as these on the Web.

Aside from jobs and school, however, there may be other reasons for your sense of boredom. One thing that is common to hear from people starting out "on their own" is that suddenly there are all of these responsibilities to manage, and it feels as though life is going to be less fun from now on. Even the people and daily activities that used to be new and exciting can start to feel less special and more like obligations. The key here is to figure out two things: first, how to infuse your life with a continued interest in trying new things and/or in seeing the beauty of the people and experiences in your life that are simply the usual, comfortable, and familiar. Second, if everything really does feel like dullsville, as though it's going to drive you insane, perhaps there's a larger issue that's keeping you down.

Assistance from a trained counselor can help you to explore any of these possibilities. As was mentioned earlier, a career counselor or advisor may be able to make suggestions about career, school, and locations with good opportunities. Does exploring some solutions like these feel impossible or worthless? If so, you may need to consider the possibility that your energy and passion are hidden by an invisible veil of depression, and sit down to talk with a supportive mental health counselor. This can help you find the roots of your boredom, develop ways to cope with the lackluster times of life (which everyone has), and find some enthusiasm for the choices ahead of you.

Alice!
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