Dear Alice,

It seems like me and several friends have been going through a bit of disappointment/boredom with life after graduation. I work long hours and am too tired to socialize like I did when I was in school. I was just wondering if there’s such a phenomenon of post-college depression?

Bored

Answer

Dear Bored,

While studying at a university, many students are active in various clubs, engaged in class lectures, and attending exciting events. They become accustomed to the constant intellectual stimulation of challenging classes, exciting discussions, and constant discovery (both in and outside the classroom). Think about it: You’ve spent four (or five) years focused on the singular goal of graduating. Mission: Accomplished. Now what? It’s no wonder you are experiencing a bit of the post-grad doldrums.

To answer your question more directly, yes, it is not uncommon for recent graduates to experience a variety of feelings such as boredom, confusion, disappointment, and even depression among other things. The exact numbers, however, haven’t been well-documented. Just know that you and your friends are in good company. The most important thing to remember is that this is a period of major life transition, and it is completely normal to feel some emotional distress.

Identifying why you’re bored may help you discover the best solution and reinvigorate your daily life. A lack of social life after college is one common concern for recent grads. Although you will probably be in touch with your close friends from college, it can be challenging (at least at first) to stay in touch, especially when everyone is busy doing their own respective things in different places. In this new environment where you are no longer surrounded by classmates and your peers, it’s likely that a great deal of your social contact will be at work. During this new life period, it is important to build and maintain a new social network. Fortunately, there are a myriad of ways you can spice up your social life. You might consider the following ideas:

- Go to places you're interested in and strike up a conversation. Perhaps you can
join a book club, recreational sports team, religious group, or volunteer organization. Going to places where there are regular meetings may make it even easier to make friends, because you see the same people who hold the same interests as you on a continual basis. If you’re apprehensive about making friends with complete strangers, remember that many other people, especially other recent graduates, are (or have been) in a similar situation. Most people would welcome the opportunity to meet someone new. Meetup, a website dedicated to connecting people with similar interests, is a great place to start.

- **Make friends at work.** Sometimes, offices sponsor employee sports teams, such as softball, basketball, or tennis after work. This is a great way to get to know your co-workers (and stay fit!), especially if your work limits the amount of social time you have with colleagues (aside from chats around the water cooler).
- **Get reacquainted with your passions.** Outside of your work hours, why not try those things you always wish you had the time to do? Perhaps you can make a ‘bucket list’ of exciting things you wish to do in your lifetime. This may include traveling to a new place, trying new cuisines, learning a new skill, and/or working on a creative project.

Sometimes, boredom after college can come if your professional goals and responsibilities aren’t progressing as you would like or if you don’t feel intellectually stimulated. Not being challenged enough may cause you to feel underworked and detached. If this is the case, it may be helpful to ask your boss if you can be included on a new initiative, or take charge of an independent assignment. Sometimes, coming from college where you’re encouraged to try different things and be creative, a 9 to 5 job can feel stifling. On the job creativity can be as simple as suggesting an office picnic and taking the lead to organize it!

If your feelings of self-doubt are overwhelming, it is important to reach out. You may want to speak with a counselor, psychologist, or close friends and family members. Also, it may be helpful to speak with a career services representative from your alma mater if you need some professional guidance.

Overall, building a strong social network and pursuing your interests may help you create a more exciting and fulfilling life. Not only will this be a worthwhile investment, it can set you on a happy and healthy path in the real world!

Alice!

Category: Emotional Health, Blues & Depression, Relationships, Friendship

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