Dear Alice,

How could one live life doing the same things every day 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 can certainly be frustrating and that may make it challenging to see beyond your current feelings. Sometimes, it can also be associated with feeling a bit unmotivated, unhappy, or defeated as well. In this state of emotion, it can be hard to rev up the ol’ engine and look for a more exciting option. It sounds like you’re trying to figure out two key things: first, how to maintain interest in trying new things and in seeing the beauty of the people and experiences in your life. Second, if everything really does feel like dullsville, perhaps there’s a larger issue that’s keeping you down.

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 full of 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 you’re feeling like you want to take some risks and test your talents and interests. It may also be that something else is going on that warrants a conversation with a professional. To get started, though, taking some time to reflect may help you be on your way to a more fulfilled life.

What about a change of scenery? If your current location has limited opportunities, you might also consider moving someplace else with more variety or activities that pique your interest. You may 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. You may try contacting your school’s career office, guidance counselor, or advisor for more information. If you currently have a job, you may consider asking if your company has branches in other areas or if they would 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 with relevant skills. You can easily find information about programs such as these on the internet.

Have you thought about what your future might look like? What sort of picture do you have in your mind about what the next few years might bring? 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 minimize 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] from the Go Ask Alice! Emotional Health [3] archive may be helpful for you to consider.

Aside from jobs and school, however, there may be other reasons for your sense of boredom. One thing that's common to hear from people starting out "on their own" is that suddenly there are a lot more 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. Each person has a journey to undertake and there can be times along the way that are more interesting than others. A key is to know that choices will always exist and change is always possible.

As 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, it may also be helpful to process these feelings with the help of a mental health professional. This may help you find the roots of your boredom, develop ways to cope with the lackluster times of life, and find some enthusiasm for the choices ahead of you.

The world is your oyster; you may just have to spend a little time to find your pearl!

Alice!
Category: 
Emotional Health [4] 
Miscellaneous [5] 

Related questions

Successful, but not happy [6] 
What does it mean to "grow up"? [7] 
I'm bored, so I eat [8] 

Resources

Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) (Morningside) [9] 
Mental Health Service (CUMC) [10] 
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