

Feeling entitled makes dull tasks drag on

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(Medical Xpress) -- People who feel entitled may think performing dull tasks is a waste of their precious time, resulting in a perception that time passes slowly, according to a new University of Michigan study.

Most people complete at least some dull and routine tasks daily. But if they feel entitled, they are more likely to view them as a waste of time, says Ed O'Brien, a [graduate student](#) in the Department of Psychology. This results in the perception that time drags while completing them.

The perception of the "waste of time" could affect time-related interpersonal tasks that might be considered dull, such as volunteering, recycling or driving. It could also extend to how much a person is willing to commit his or her time in a relationship, O'Brien says.

Entitlement is the sense that one deserves more than others. It does not have to involve resources, such as possessing materials or being rich.

"It is the feeling that you are owed something without necessarily putting in effort to attain it," O'Brien said.

For example, an entitled student expects that he "deserves" an "A" regardless of whether he studied for the test. An entitled employee expects that she should get extra vacation days regardless of whether she worked overtime or not. The research suggests that these students and employees more generally perceive their time as valuable and so are more likely to perceive time as wasted or dragging while doing tasks that do not benefit themselves.

The research looks at the link between self-focus and time perception. Three separate studies were conducted: the fun/boring [word game](#), the [online survey](#), and the word-flash experiment. All participants were [college students](#), but each study was completed by a different set of individuals.

For Study 1, students saw a giant block of letters and were asked to copy it repeatedly word-for-word. Researchers asked students to rate how fun the task was from 1 (not at all) to 7 (extremely). The average score was 2.8. Even though all students did this task for 10 minutes, entitled students thought it took much longer.

For Study 2, researchers designed "dull" survey questions involving day-to-day things. Students were asked 27 questions such as, "What is your favorite day of the week," "In which campus building do you spend the most time?" and "How many meals do you tend to eat per day?"

Participants in the entitled group thought it took more time to complete the survey than those in the control group: 11 minutes and eight minutes, respectively. The entitled group also said the survey was a greater waste of time than those from the control group.

"Consistent with our theory, dull tasks crawl for entitled people because they view them as a waste of time," O'Brien said.

For Study 3, students stared at a computer screen for 12 minutes; every once in a while there was a flash of light, which were actually subliminal words. In the control group, the words included "water," "something," "another" and "little." The other group had entitled, self-focus words such as "special," "important," "deserve" and "superior."

Next, the students were told to exit the laboratory and walk down the hall where an experimenter was waiting to give them credit for taking the survey. Unknown to the [students](#), the experimenter timed how long it took participants to walk to where he was sitting.

Participants, who saw the flashes of entitled words, rated time as passing more slowly, thought the task was less interesting, and thought it was a greater waste of time. In addition, the entitled group walked faster when exiting the laboratory (12 seconds) than the other group (13 seconds)—presumably because they felt they had wasted their time and were more anxious to get on with their day.

Informally, when researchers asked participants to describe the study after they finished, everyone reported that the task felt dull.

More information: The study appears in the October issue of *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*:
psp.sagepub.com/content/37/10.toc

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