

Being bored at work can make us more creative, study finds

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Most of us think of being bored at work as a negative experience, but a new study suggests it can have positive results including an increase in creativity because it gives us time to daydream.

That is the finding of a study being presented today, Wednesday 9 January 2013, by Dr Sandi Mann and Rebekah Cadman from the University of Central Lancashire at the Annual Conference of the British Psychological Society Division of Occupational Psychology. The Conference is being held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Chester.

Dr Mann and Ms Cadman conducted two studies. In the first 40 people were asked to carry out a boring task (copying numbers out of a telephone directory) for 15 minutes, and were then asked to complete another task (coming up with different uses for a pair of polystyrene cups) that gave them a chance to display their [creativity](#).

It turned out that the 40 people who had first copied out the telephone numbers were more creative than a control group of 40 who had just been asked to come up with uses for the cups.

To see if daydreaming was a factor in this effect, a second boring task was introduced that allowed even more daydreaming than the boring writing [task](#).. This second study saw 30 people copying out the numbers as before, but also included a second group of 30 reading rather than writing them.

Again the researchers found that the people in the [control group](#) were least creative, but the people who had just read the names were more creative than those who had to write them out. This suggests that more passive boring activities, like reading or perhaps attending meetings, can lead to more creativity - whereas writing, by reducing the scope for daydreaming, reduces the creativity-enhancing effects of boredom.

Dr Mann says: "[Boredom](#) at work has always been seen as something to be eliminated, but perhaps we should be embracing it in order to enhance our creativity. What we want to do next is to see what the practical implications of this finding are. Do people who are bored at work become more creative in other areas of their [work](#) - or do they go home and write novels?"

Provided by The British Psychological Society

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