

Boredom research has now become more interesting

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Being bored has just become a little more nuanced, with the addition of a fifth type of boredom by which to describe this emotion. The finding has been published in Springer's journal *Motivation and Emotion*. In cooperation with colleagues at the University of Munich, the University of Ulm, McGill University in Montreal, and the City University of New York, educational research by Dr. Thomas Goetz of the University of Konstanz and the Thurgau University of Teacher Education provides insight into how boredom is experienced in everyday life. The study is among the first to quantifiably investigate different types of boredom.

The study builds on preliminary research done by Goetz and colleague Anne Frenzel in 2006 in which they differentiated between four types of [boredom](#) according to the levels of arousal (ranging from calm to fidgety) and how positive or negative boredom is experienced (so-called valence). These were indifferent boredom (relaxed, withdrawn, indifferent), calibrating boredom (uncertain, receptive to change/distraction), searching boredom (restless, active pursuit of change/distraction) and reactant boredom (high reactant, motivated to leave a situation for specific alternatives).

The researchers have now identified another boredom subtype, namely apathetic boredom, an especially unpleasant form that resembles learned helplessness or depression. It is associated with low arousal levels and high levels of aversion.

Goetz, Frenzel and a team of fellow researchers conducted two real-time

experience studies over two weeks among 63 German university students and 80 German high school learners. Participants had to complete digital questionnaires through the course of a day on a Personal Digital Assistant device about their activities and experiences.

Because of the assumed link between boredom and depression, the research group found it alarming that apathetic boredom was reported relatively frequently by 36 percent of the [high school](#) students sampled.

The findings show that the five boredom types do not just depend on the intensity of the boredom being felt, but mainly on the real-life situation in which it is experienced. Another interesting realization is that people do not just randomly experience the different boredom types over time, but that they tend to experience one type.

"We therefore speculate that experiencing specific boredom types might, to some degree, be due to personality-specific dispositions," reports Goetz. Further, the results shed new light on discussions about whether boredom has positive or negative effects on learning and achievement. "This question can only be adequately answered if we know what type of boredom a student experiences," Goetz adds.

More information: Goetz, T. et al (2013). Types of Boredom: An Experience Sampling Approach, *Motivation and Emotion*, [DOI: 10.1007/s11031-013-9385-y](#)

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