

355 - What to Do When You're Bored with Your Life

Hey there! You're listening to The Lazy Genius Podcast! I'm Kendra Adachi, and I'm here to help you be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't!

Today is episode 355 - What to Do When You're Bored with Your Life. This feeling hits all of us at some point. You're bored with the meals you eat, the clothes you wear, the stuff in your house, bored with your job, your routine, your partner, all kinds of things. Adults don't get bored the way kids do. There's no "I'm bored I don't have anything to do" when you're a responsible grownup. There is always something to do, and even when we have leisure time, we struggle to choose how to spend it! So there is literally never a time where we have nothing to do. In fact, we would *love* to be bored in the traditional sense. I would love to be bored. But that's not what we're talking about here. We're talking about what happens when you're bored with your life or a specific part of it. Today, I'm going to offer you a process to help you get past the feeling of being bored with something in your life. Also today is an aggressively windy day to the point where the wind was shaking my office door a second ago. Usually the loud noises I hear, you don't, but still. Just a heads up that sometimes the wind sounds like a train today. Holy moly.

Okay, let's talk about adult boredom. For a lot of us, this type of boredom originates with repetition. We eat the same thing, wear the same thing, see the same people, have the same fight, drive the same route, do the same work, look at the same room, and there is something about that sameness, that repetition that leaves us discontent. Repetition itself is actually really great for a lot of us. Just because you drink the same type of coffee every day doesn't automatically mean you're bored with it or ever will be. Repetition on its own doesn't equal boredom, but repetition paired with some kind of discontentment does. If you are repeating something again and again and it's not satisfying, fulfilling, fun, or any other word that resonates, you're likely going to get bored with it. So for adults, repetition plus discontentment probably equals boredom.

What's interesting about this kind of boredom is that it's often stimulating. It makes a lot of us frustrated, possibly demonstrative, and can lead to Big Black Trash Bag Energy. We are so tired of being bored with our lives, and that boredom activates us. It makes us want to make some kind of big change. Or it activates us emotionally and makes us feel big feelings about our lives. We might even generalize and catastrophize a little, thinking about what could be, about what life would look like if we had a different job, a different family structure, a different partner, a different body, a different personality even. Depending on how compromised we are, especially as women with hormones, ordinary pressures of life, sleep deprivation, and how surly our people have been toward us that day, we might spiral pretty quickly.

The other day, I was with one of my kids who was in his own state of catastrophizing, and we talked about these kinds of feelings, about how they spiral, and I said it was like a twisty slide at the park. Once you push off onto that slide, you go faster and faster, swirling to the bottom, and it's hard to stop. As we talked, we called some of his sweeping statements about his own life "bottom of the slide words." All of us have bottom of the slide words. All of us have said

something that is so broad and encompassing and not truly representative of how we actually feel, but because we already started sliding, it's tough to stop. So the work is in noticing when you're having bottom of the slide feelings or saying bottom of the slide words. Sometimes our boredom with our lives feels bigger than it is, and naming that discrepancy is the first step in finding contentment again. It not be that you're bored with your entire life. It might be that you feel like you've lost yourself in the stage of life you're in, and you see it every time you look in the mirror. Or you've been making the same seven dinners over and over again, and rather than naming that you're bored with dinner, you hit the bottom of the slide and are frustrated that your family is so picky that you can't cook and eat the way you want to and you slide deep into resentment of your family. Or maybe you're frustrated with the repetition of those seven meals that were put in place because your boss is demanding and you don't have time to cook a real dinner, and in that frustration you start sliding and find yourself deeply discontent with your job and start looking for job openings in other places while you eat one of your seven dinners again.

So all of that to say, adult boredom can activate us. Our discontentment compels us to make some kind of change, often a big one, or we feel big feelings that can spiral into a general discontentment with our whole life.

For other people, adult boredom can shut you down. Being annoyed with the repetitive nature of certain parts of your life makes you feel like Eeyore. You're just kind of ho hum about it, and it slows you down. You think there's nothing about your life that stimulates you, so you just match the pace of how you live with the pace of how you're feeling. "This is how it is" in your best Eeyore voice. So it's not stimulating but actually a little depressing. I don't mean clinical depression but general depression. You feel heavy and slow in a way that doesn't match how you want to feel about your life, and it's hard to find joy in it.

All of this might seem a little heavy, and because I care about you, I hope this isn't your consistent story. I hope this comes in waves rather than being the water you always swim in. But I bring it up because, number one it's common, and number two, the pace of our lives does not often leave space for us to think about our lives. We go and go and go, and if we're feeling discontent or bored with certain parts of our lives, we just assume the whole thing is bad. We're bored of everything. We're discontent with everything. Even though it might be just one thing, that boredom or discontentment or frustration bleeds into other areas, simply because the way we live doesn't naturally have space for us to consider what's really going on. That's why I love two of our thirteen Lazy Genius principles: schedule rest and let people in. When we take time to rest, we see things more clearly, and when we let people in to how we're feeling, we feel seen and encouraged and no longer alone. And that's positive. That's a positive upswing and even changes our brain chemistry. Connection with people changes our brain chemistry to see our lives differently.

So all that to say, adult boredom, when it hits, could hit you pretty hard. Knowing that a lot of us experience that all or nothing energy in our lives is helpful in and of itself. We can recognize, "oh, these are bottom of the slide words. What's really going on here?" And then you can actually consider what specifically, and then you can be better equipped to find a real, practical,

small change that can successfully move you past the boredom, that brings some contentment with how things are or an idea on how things might be able to change in a direction that matters to you.

So let's walk through a little exercise here to help you when you're bored with your life, whether it's a specific part or the whole dingdang thing.

First, name it. Complete the sentence: I'm bored with [blank.] And you can say, I'm bored with my whole life. That's fair if that's how you're feeling. Is it accurate? Probably not, but we'll get to that. But answer that: I'm bored with [blank]. I'm bored with what we eat. I'm bored with my clothes. I'm bored in this city. I'm bored with my job. I'm bored with myself. First, name it. I'm bored with [blank].

Second, check it. Check in as to why you're feeling this way. Did you feel this way last week? Will you feel this way next week? Is it your hormones? Did something happen at work to set you off? Is there a lurking expectation that you're feeling from someone else that you don't know how you're going to meet, and it's festering? Is there a lurking expectation you had within yourself that you didn't know was there, and now you're disappointed? Is that your kid just a meltdown and yelled at you and now you're dysregulated? Check it. Check that boredom, check that discontentment against what's going on right now. There's a chance it'll pass. Or lessen. Or become clear after a little bit. Name it, then check it.

Next, if in the checking, you're still like, ugh I am still bored with this thing, and I don't think it's going to change anytime soon, then snap it. Name it, check it, then snap it. Do that by completing this sentence: If I could snap my fingers, [blank] would happen. If I could snap my fingers, [blank] would happen. Flip the script on your current situation. Change it up however you want. Be ridiculous even. If I could snap my fingers, I would have a personal chef. If I could snap my fingers, my husband would happily do way more in the house than he currently does. If I could snap my fingers, my kids would eat whatever I make without complaining. If I could snap my fingers, I'd have a new job in a new city. If I could snap my fingers, I would live in a different home that actually reflects my style. If I could snap my fingers, I would know my style. Name it, check it, snap it. Flip the coin to what your life would like if you could snap your fingers and make this boredom automatically better.

Now, you might think that doing this would make you more discontent. I can understand that argument. Hopefully it won't, or at least not for very long. The point of snapping it is to help you identify what's really going on. By naming a solution, even one that's completely out of your reach in the way you describe, you might be naming at least the category of the solution. This is especially true if you do feel bored with your whole life. If you start out by naming, I'm bored with my whole life, and then you snap and say, if I could snap my fingers, I'd live in a different place, you can ask yourself why. What is it about a different place? Is it that you need a change of scenery? Is it because a new place means you'd leave some broken, hurtful relationships behind? Is it because you've lived here forever and you're itching for a change? Again, the checking step before this helps rationalize some of these already. But snapping it helps you see

a wide path you might want to walk down. You can't get a personal chef probably, but at least you know that something in the meal prep, decision making, cooking area is what would make this sense of boredom ease a little. So name it, check it, snap it.

Next, soften it. Soften it. First, be kind to yourself. If you snapped it and said something you'd be embarrassed to say to another person, like if I could snap my fingers, I'd be married to someone else, be kind to yourself. This is a thought exercise, and sometimes we feel big feelings about our lives. If you're bored with your whole life because you're disconnected from your partner, of course your snap it would be if I could snap my fingers I'd have a different partner. So soften yourself by being kind to yourself in whatever comes out.

You can also soften it by naming your season of life. Is this a season thing? Do I need to soften my expectations because of the season I'm in? Is it a resources thing? Are you wishing for more time, more energy, more help, more money? Allow that answer to soften your reality, or more specifically even your perspective about your reality. When you snap it, you likely will see a stark difference to what you're experiencing now. Soften it by making it more connected to your reality. Soften by naming the season you're in, the ways you wish you had more help, the fact that you're in perimenopause and aren't sleeping because of it. Soften the snap a little by kindly naming where you are today.

And then, name it again. So name it, name what you're bored with; check it, check that against what's happening in and around you right now; snap it, snap your fingers and let that stark difference help you identify what really might be going on; soften it, access some kindness towards yourself, your people, your season, your resources, and your reality; and then name it again. Use that information to name what you're really bored with, what you're really discontent about, what specifically you'd like to change.

Then ask yourself, What do I need? What am I missing? And get more specific by asking how can I start small? Nothing happens in big sweeps. Very few of us have the ability to literally quit our jobs and move to a different place and start over, right? That's why we have episodes like How to Start Fresh When You Can't Start Over. Starting over is not doable for most of us, so instead of resenting that and continuing to be bored and discontent with your life, let's name it, check it, snap it, soften it, name it again, and then ask what do I need to start small here? You can move forward in improving this area of your life! Softening it doesn't mean ignoring it or just powering through. You can make changes in areas that matter to you, but as we all know, you can't do it all at once. You have to start small. What do you need in order to do that?

So let's walk through this process twice with two different examples. The first I already mentioned and might be a little heavy but is also super relevant to a lot of you listening. The second is much lighter. I already mentioned that one of the things that might come from your snap is naming you want a different partner. What if the thing you're bored with is enormous like that? Holy moly, that's a lot, but boredom in committed relationships is often part of the deal. I've known very few marriages and longterm partnerships that have not gone through some season

of boredom with each other, with disconnection and discontentment. So let's go through this process assuming that's the issue.

We start with name it. I'm bored with my marriage! Okay. Now check it. Yes, I feel more intense about that today than I did maybe last week, but I feel it often enough that I know I want something to change. Okay. snap it. If I could snap my fingers, honestly, I'd have a different partner. Okay. Soften it. I don't want a different person. I just want my partner to be different in this area. I just want him to help me more, to carry more of the load, to acknowledge the load that I do carry. Okay. Name it again. I'm bored with my marriage because I feel like my partner doesn't see me, doesn't see how much I do or how fun I am or that I'm sad about our marriage. Okay. Next, what do you need? You might answer, I need courage to tell him. Or I need time to myself on a regular basis. Or I need regular, daily acknowledgement and gratitude for the role that I play in this family. Or I need my partner to initiate conversation or activities or connection that aren't related to the kids or the house or responsibilities. Do you see how this is becoming something that's actually doable? Okay, so finally, how can you start small in moving in this direction? You might say I can listen to Kendra's episode on How to Lazy Genius the Division of Labor. Look at that. I can talk to my therapist about this in my next session. I can talk to my partner who is actually really understanding, just a little clueless, and I'm going to invite that conversation this weekend when neither of us has to gear up for a busy weekday the next day.

So you see how we went from a frustrated, activated "I'm bored with my marriage" to I'm going to talk to Dan Friday night and let him know I'm feeling sad that I don't feel seen. Doesn't that feel better? Now, is it easier? Not always. Sometimes it feels easier to stay bored, to stay discontent, to stay resentful than to risk disappointment in trying to make it better. I get that. In this hypothetical specifically, I think it comes down to choosing if you'd rather resent your husband or be disappointed by that first conversation. The resentment isn't going anywhere. Without some kind of actual change, you'll just stay resentful. But a conversation, or more accurately a series of them because this is part of partnership, a conversation might be disappointing in that he doesn't get it right away, but it also might start to help him get it. You and Dan might start taking small steps together over the literal life of your relationship to becoming more equal partners in the management of your collective life. For me, that's a no-brainer. I'd much rather risk being disappointed than stay resentful, and knowing the energy and heart of this community, I think you're probably the same.

That's a heavier example, again probably very relevant to some of you, but it's good to walk the process. Now let's do it with something a little lighter maybe. First, name it. I'm bored with my clothes. I feel boredom statements have that timbre to them. I'm bored with my clothes! Okay. Check it. Am I PMSing and super bloated and cranky and therefore everything I put on feels like a trashbag? Okay. Or maybe no. Maybe you're legit bored with your clothes and have been for a long time for any number of reasons. Okay. snap it. If I could snap my fingers, I would have an entirely new wardrobe, kind of like the old What Not to Wear show where they'd get five grand and get all new clothes in two days. If I could snap my fingers, I would know what I like. If I could snap my fingers, I would never have to shop again. If I could snap my fingers, I would like how I look every time I get dressed. Do you see how all these snaps indicate a different problem? If

you'd have a new wardrobe, maybe you've been wearing the same clothes for over a decade and you need a refresh. Your body has changed, your style has changed, your taste has changed, your clothes have changed because they're old. And frankly that's one just snap. Okay, next is soften it. I know I want all new clothes, but my resources won't let me to do that. But it's normal and okay for me to enjoy what I wear and want it to reflect who I am. I can care about how I present myself to the world, and I can do that without replacing everything I own. Okay. Name it again. I'm bored because I haven't gotten myself anything new that I really and truly love in a very long time. Okay. What do I need? I need a new piece that adds some pizzazz for this upcoming season! We've entered spring here, so maybe it's a fun new dress or a cute pair of bright sunglasses that makes any outfit feel more put together or a pair of shoes that does the same. I need one new thing to add some fun to what I already have. I also need to get rid of some clothes that don't fit my body or my style anymore. Obviously, that's within reason because I still need things to wear, but if I literally can't wear it, I need to remove it from my closet so I can see what I do love or at least tolerate more than the other stuff. And finally what can I do to start small with what I need? I can clean out one drawer. I can go to a shoe store and browse to see what pairs make me feel excited. I can talk to an expert! I can hire Erin Stoll from Style Thief Fashion to meet with me for one session to help me name some things about my style and what I can do next.

So in this example, we went from I'm so bored with my clothes! to I'm going to stop by the shoe store after work and see what kinds of things catch my eye and get me excited. Not even to buy yet. Just to see what I like. What a difference, right?

This process really does work. Name it, check it, snap it, soften it, name it again. Then name what you need and a small way you can start.

And that's what to do when you're bored with your life.

Before we go, let's celebrate the Lazy Genius of the Week! This week, it's Kim Doucette who shared the idea of her car bag. Kim writes, "I have a designated car bag! In the mornings before we head out, I put everything in there that we would need to bring in the car and give my kids the heads up that whatever they want to have for the car rides today needs to get in the green bag before we leave. We're in the car a lot because we have one car so we drive my husband to work and back (30 mins each way) plus whatever activities we have.

This has totally solved the whole "running inside for the third time super fast because someone realized they wanted their Pop It but oh crap we're so late" problem, as well as the using our car as a storage unit problem - I collect everything in the car into the bag at the end of the day and everything comes inside to be used or put away properly."

This is a great idea, Kim! Kim also posted a photo of the bag she uses in the Lazy Genius Facebook group, and it's a rectangular bag with a frame. It's almost like a storage bin but more flexible and with handles. I love the idea of using bags to get out the door (episode 226 is all about that), so I love the specificity of this. It uses a couple of Lazy Genius principles: put

everything in its place since everything for the car goes in the car bag, build the right routines since taking the bag in and out of the car every time is built into the routine of leaving the house, and ask the magic question. What can I do now to make being in the car easier later? Have everything you need in the car bag. It's great, Kim, so thanks for sharing, and congratulations on being the Lazy Genius of the Week!

One more quick thing. If you listen to this episode on either Monday March 4 or Tuesday March 5 and you're not already on our mailing list, this month's Latest Lazy Letter goes out Wednesday, and it has some really news in it. The newsletter people always get to hear fun things first, and this month there's a cool one. So if you're not already subscribed, go to thelazygeniuscollective.com/join, and sign up so you'll get that email on Wednesday morning!

This episode is hosted by me, Kendra Adachi, and executive produced by Kendra Adachi, Jenna Fischer, and Angela Kinsey. The Lazy Genius Podcast is enthusiastically part of the Office Ladies Network. Special thanks to Leah Jarvis for weekly production.

Thanks, y'all, for listening, and until next time, be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't. I'm Kendra, and I'll see you next week!