

Satsang with Swami Vidadatmananda Saraswati
Arsha Vidya Gurukulam
Freedom from Boredom

Question

We often get bored in college. How do we overcome boredom?

Answer

The only way to overcome boredom is to cultivate an interest in the subject. It is we who decide whether something is interesting or uninteresting. It is possible to make things interesting. If you take an interest in something, it can become interesting. People take an interest in a lot of different things. For instance, there are some who observe insects all their lives. So it is indeed up to us to develop an interest in something. We tend to dismiss things as boring or uninteresting. It is true that a lecture becomes interesting only when the speaker is interested in what he is talking. If it were boring, how could a professor hold forth for 3 hours! At least it is interesting from the professor's perspective. If he enjoys what he does, the listeners enjoy it also. If it bores him, the listeners are bored too. Is it the way the subject matter is treated that is not enjoyable? Or is the subject matter itself that is not enjoyable? If the subject matter were not enjoyable, how could so many people have written books on those topics? It can potentially be enjoyable to me because I am supposed to study! When I am required to do that I may as well make it an enjoyable process and do it with some interest, rather than treating it as a task. Therefore, tell your mind to make the subject more interesting.

As it is, today's children want to be entertained in the manner that television provides entertainment. We are accustomed to being entertained on TV and don't want to exert ourselves. So teachers have a hard time in schools. The people on TV are entertainers, teachers are not! We have to change our orientation and our demand that somebody must entertain us. We must learn how to derive pleasure from what there is, rather than demand that something be delivered in a pleasurable manner.

Perhaps if you go to class prepared, you can appreciate the teacher's treatment of

the subject matter. You could perhaps take an interest in how the subject is developed, the teacher's thought pattern, communication skills, etc. You can perhaps even learn what not to do.

To say that something is boring may not be fair. It means that we are not doing something required on our part and also that we are dismissive.

Anything can be made interesting if you take an interest in that. You can take an interest in cutting vegetables, and watch how they boil, notice what goes on when they are boiling, etc. Take some interest in it such as people take an interest in children or plants. You can take an interest in cleaning the floor and observe how the dust moves as you clean. You can watch those things if the mind is available. Generally speaking, the mind is not available. It tends to be bored and that is why the lecture seems boring.

Things become boring when they are not important to us. If I care for something, it will not seem boring to me. Let us discover the importance of things. I am basically interested in myself and anything that is related to me is interesting to me. Therefore if I can see how something can be of value to me, I can automatically take an interest in it.

For instance, some students of Engineering do not take any interest in mathematics, because they do not perceive what relevance it can have. While a particular subject may not be useful in the way that you think it should be, it can be useful in terms of cultivating your intellectual abilities, your thinking and your logic, which can prove to be useful in other tasks. We should take the time to ponder the value and importance of things that seem boring and the attempt to do so, if nothing else, will at least train the mind to take an interest in things. That itself is a valuable thing. In the future, you could get bored with many things. A doctor can get bored of seeing the same type of patients and going through the same old routine in testing them, but it is essential for the patient. We have to use our creativity and our thinking ability to acquire an interest in anything at hand. And we can do that.¹

¹ Transcribed and edited by Jayshree Ramakrishnan and KK Davey.