



Parenting during pandemic

Day 14: Bored, bored, bored! How to beat the boredom of lockdown

Boredom can be thought of as a feeling. Often when we feel bored, our response is to do something, to take some action, to change our behaviour. What happens when your children tell you they are bored during lockdown? You probably tell them to go and do something or list a number of things they could do. We have already produced a list of [50 things to do at home with children](#) so there would be no point in repeating this here. Instead, we are going to focus on the thinking behind boredom so that when you and/or your children have this feeling, you can tackle it by changing what you are doing (the behaviour) and the way you are thinking about it (the cognitions or thoughts). If you use both of these things to change the feeling rather than just one, there may be more chance of making a change to that feeling. Here's how it works.

We are going to focus on what is sometimes called cognitive re-framing. This is where we take unhelpful thoughts and try to change them into more helpful thoughts. Notice this is not about negative thoughts and positive thoughts. It's not that simple and looking at things in this very obvious way sometimes isn't helpful. Cognitive re-framing seeks to remain realistic rather than trying to just change everything into a positive.

For example, rather than thinking that *we are all stuck at home*, we can think *we are all safe at home*. The only change here was one word but the emphasis is changed and the emotion we attach to it is therefore changed. Rather than thinking *lockdown is really boring*, we could think *lockdown is really important and helps everyone stay safe*.

Cognitive re-framing may be something you do with your children at other times anyway, such as if they are arguing with siblings or friends. The thing that will make it most difficult during pandemic, and particularly if the thoughts are about being bored; is the fact that you will feel bored too sometimes during lockdown. It's hard to cognitively re-frame ourselves because we all think we are right all of the time. This is not in a boastful or big-headed type of way but just simply that we don't go around thinking things that we think are silly; we generally think things we think are right. So if your child says they are bored and you are bored too, it may be hard to move this on.

One thing that can be helpful is to acknowledge that it is likely to be boring staying at home sometimes. There is a truth in this that is helpful to validate for your child. You do, however, want to move on from this so the next thing to try could be being detectives together with a mission to look for all the non-boring things at home. This can be things you have done and enjoyed or things you would like to do or things others have done or are doing that you might like to try etc. By collecting your evidence, you are being good detectives with the added bonus that your evidence is all working against your thoughts about being bored and breaking that down.

Another thing to try could be a mindreading game where you imagine you have told someone you are bored and you try to read their mind and guess what helpful things they would tell you. This can be people you know because you may have a good idea of what they would say, or it could be someone from TV or a favourite book. What do superheroes do when they're bored anyway?

The typical *try to do something else when you are bored* solution is really about distraction and this will work to some extent but it does what it says on the tin and distracts from the problem rather than trying to deal with the problem. Cognitive re-framing allows you to think about the problem, acknowledge that it's there and it's real but try to look for clues that there may be other ways to look at things that would change these thoughts into something more helpful.

If you are struggling to move on from the boredom, try thinking about it head on. Draw a comic book together about Captain Boredom thinking about all his traits but also his weaknesses. Use this to move on to thinking what would it take to defeat him. Draw your superhero and think about the traits they need to defeat Captain Boredom.

Or, if you have been following the blog over the last few days, you will have seen our posts about writing your story about the pandemic. This could be your chance to write about the boredom and to think what you want future generations to know about this. You could make it a story of strength about what we did to manage the boredom during lockdown.

It may be helpful to think about taking the problem to someone else. You could ask your child to think what they would say to a friend who was bored during lockdown or what their teacher would tell them to do. They could write a helpful resource for other children about what to do about boredom at this time or record this as a video.

If you are looking for practical suggestions of things to do (behaviours) if your children feel bored then check out our list of [50 things to do at home](#). Remember that trying to change the thoughts as well as the behaviours may give you a better chance at breaking out of that feeling of boredom.



We hope these tips are helpful. Well done on managing another day off school and we hope you will join us again tomorrow.

Tomorrow's topic: Are there still weekends in lockdown or are all the days the same? Which is most helpful for children during the pandemic?

Please contact us with questions, comments or topics you'd like to see covered. We'd love to hear your feedback.

Wishing you a safe and healthy path through this pandemic.