



## How to Escape from the Boring Routine

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I've just finished a relaxed breakfast on my balcony here in the French Alps. As myself and my wife sat chatting, a mini-bus passed on the road above us – a series of blank, bored, depressed looking faces stared absent-mindedly down the hillside towards us. For all the world, it looked like a van taking prisoners out on a work detail – the only giveaway that it was, in fact, a busload of holidaymakers was the “Office de Tourisme” logo on the bus's bodywork! Yeah, people of their holidays, looking as if they're bored to tears.

We all take our two- or three-week vacations to break away from the norms and routines of life – but it constantly amazes me as to just how many people fall into their holiday routine too, becoming bored after four or five days. Unfortunately, you see, the very concept of routine (and the resulting boredom) is just that – a concept, a construct of the normal mind. In his book, “Flow”, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi provides enlightening insight into the extent to which boredom and routine are no more than useless thoughts and how, with a focused and creative mind, someone doing the most mundane and repetitive of tasks can rise above the normal temptation to be bored, to be depressed by that boredom and to end up thinking that they hate their lives – all those useless thoughts are simply on the same continuum.

He quotes the case of a guy working the auto production lines in Detroit, who performed the same manual task, day in, day out, for forty years – and how he used each repetition of the task as an opportunity to complete the task more effectively, more efficiently, quicker – as if he were working against the clock. On mentioning this to a client of mine, his reply was that, surely, this chap was simply deluding himself by playing mind games. My answer? The normal adult mind is constantly playing games with you – why not turn the tables for a change!

This may seem like a trite cliché for an answer – but consider this. The normal subconscious mind is constantly engrossed in a type of computer game that has nothing to do with reality. The game's programmes were installed in your subconscious when you were young and impressionable, during your formative years. Now, decades later, your mind is still playing the same computer game – but it thinks it's happening now. That's how unreal the normal version of today's reality is – and it runs (or, more to the point, ruins) normal lives.

Your subconscious mind is able to play these tricks on you because you have a highly developed ability to complete repetitive tasks without needing to pay them any attention. This, you might be forgiven for thinking, is no mean feat – surely, a good thing. Unfortunately, whilst this ability does have obvious benefits, the big downside is that you end up wandering through life mindlessly and repetitively – even when you’re supposed to be enjoying yourself on your holidays! This state of near suspended animation means that normal people end up being bored by a routine to which they’re not even actively paying attention.

This boredom – or routine – however, is no more than a state of mind. It has nothing to do with the reality that each moment is unique, each breath we take is a one-off, each second provides us with a wealth of opportunities to do things differently, to make new choices, to break out of our perceived routine. This “altered” state of mind is liberation – I know it, many of my clients tell me that they’re experienced this liberation too. It’s not just a liberation from the drudgery of routine, however, it’s a liberation from everything your life has been up to the moment when you make the choice – a freedom to act in new, spontaneous and exciting ways – a liberation that will, if followed, bring you to the truly happy, content and successful life that your heart, deep down, really desires – effortlessly.

Now, that’s quite a big statement. However Csikszentmihalyi’s work in the field of the “psychology of happiness” and more recent neuro-psychological work indicates that the possibilities and potential that you have for an effortlessly happy and successful life are directly correlated with your ability to be not bored, un-routine, to be attentive to the moment at hand. In other words, if you start playing mind games with yourself, just like our friend on Detroit’s production lines, that bring your attention sharply into focus in the present moment, then your ability to pay attention will lead you effortlessly to a life of happiness and success.

Mindless routine, mind-numbing boredom are borne out of a lack of attentiveness. Luckily, we all have the innate ability to engross ourselves in what we are currently doing – we were all experts at the art of paying full attention to the here and now when we were children, when we were fully open-minded when, in fact, we installed those old outdated programs that our subconscious mind will continue to play until the day we die unless we drag our attention back to the only place and time we have – the here and now.

So, what’s happening in the here and now? You have your five senses, start using them again – deliberately – to find out, you might be surprised at the results.