

Are You Bored?



Practical things to do when you are bored in your relationship or marriage.

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Boredom is real

This week I've had to engage about three married couples on this subject. They are tired and they are fed up with monotony. They did not seem to be angry with their spouse, they were just fed up with *same ol same ol*. And I could feel their pain. I could see they were frantically looking for answers too. Because, if you say this marriage is forever, as in forever, and we are just five years gone, and we are this bored, then how do we cope or handle this for the rest of our lives.

What were these couples saying? They had lost interest in their marriages, the initial enthusiasm and excitement was gone. They had run out of things or activities to do. They were no longer showing concern about their spouse, they didn't care anymore. The jokes had become dry, the gist had become mundane and the expectancy of waking up to a brand new day is gone. It's a tough one and it's a serious issue. It is therefore pertinent we find answers to this monster.

Let me say upfront that Boredom happens to the best of us. We all get bored sometimes about things, people, activity, or even life itself. We get bored. We get tired. We become uninterested. We are tired of the *same ol same ol*, the mundane, and the very ordinary state of our lives. Boredom happens to the best of us. I define boredom, in relationships, as being repetitive without being creative. It is being predictable without being exceptional.

"Have you ever noticed that the vast majority of romantic movies and books are all about the "chase"? They play on the tension of possible lovers who have great obstacles to overcome in order to be together. Once they proclaim their love, the movie or book ends. In fact, if a couple in the story starts out married, they are likely to be apart, with a more suitable partner, by the end. Living together faithfully for 50 years just isn't that exciting." Dr Juli Slattery

Allow me paint a few scenarios.

1. Your first week at your job

Your first week at your job may prove tough and exciting, challenging and interesting, tasking and fun, but after a while you master the processes, you become skilled in the modes of operation that running your daily bit is no longer strewn with difficulties rather you breeze through your daily schedules with clockwork precision. What happened? You've grown familiar. You've become accustomed. You've become conversant. And it is a good thing because if you are not your boss will throw you out. (Isn't that why they put you on probation for six months?) But after a number of years on the same job, regardless of the few promotions that come along the way, you begin to desire new horizons. *After a while* you want another job.

2. Your new powerful car.

A new powerful car comes with all the stimulating, electrifying functions and gadgets. You test drive and enjoy the full power, your passengers giggle uncontrollably. You are awed at the ingenuity of technology and the creativity of the human resource. You clean and wash it per second per second. Any scratch on it from anyone receives your wrath and indignation. But after a while it does get old. After a

while, I doubt if you can count the number of scratches on the car. Then you begin to desire another car. You want something new and faster. The one-time powerful car becomes just like any other car. You've gotten past the initial excitement, you've run out of adventurous things to explore, you need a new car. *After a while* you want another car.

3. The excitement of a brand new shirt or dress

When you buy a brand new shirt or a beautiful new dress, you probably get compliments on the first and second time of wearing it (I doubt a third time compliment). After the first wear, the elements of nature begin to act on it. The chemicals from the soap or detergent, the effects of sun or rain, they all begin to perform their natural functions. So after a while the shirt is no longer shining and the glow and radiance it once had disappears. Why? It is subject to nature and the corruption in nature. And I know you too are no longer excited wearing it overtime. *After a while* you want another shirt.

4. Dinner rice.

Rice is one of Nigeria's staple foods. Your party is not complete without rice. And we have varieties of it. From fried rice to coconut rice to jollof rice. You can swing it anyhow you like it. Rice is also a delicious meal

when served with chicken, some little salad by the side and some hot, smoking *moin moin*. I hope you are not salivating already.

However, if as a husband, every time I come back home from work all you offer me is rice and chicken. Monday, dinner, rice and chicken. Tuesday, dinner, rice and chicken. Wednesday, dinner, rice and chicken, Thursday, dinner, rice and chicken, Friday, dinner, rice and chicken. *Hughhhhh!* Come on! A day will come and I will cry out. And if I don't I will probably close from work on a Friday and I would almost smell, from my office, the repulsive aroma of rice and chicken waiting for me at home. The thought of it will push me to branch in a nearby restaurant for some hot pounded yam with some delicious *ofoowerri* soup. I would treat myself to this sumptuous meal, clean my mouth and come home. On getting home, I would give you a flimsy excuse and refuse your rice and just retire to bed.

After a while you get tired of eating the same food every now and then.

After a while

After a while you need a new flat screen TV.

After a while you want another phone.

After a while, a change of wardrobe.

After a while you need a new shoe.

After a while you need a new pant.

After a while, a new pair of jeans.

After a while, a new job.

After a while, a new car.

A new shirt.

A new girlfriend.

A new wife?

A new husband?

Have our spouses become material things that we now change from time to time?

No.

Yes.

Maybe.

Whichever way you look at it, it's the same thirst and craving we go through; material or human, male or female.

Our '**after a while**' may have different timelines.

55 hours - Britney Spears and Jason Alexander

9 days – Carmen Electra and Dennis Rodman.

18 days – Alli Landry and Mario Lopez

32 days – Drew Barrymore and Jeremy Thomas

60 days – Pamela Anderson and Rick Salomon

72 days – Kim Kardashian and Kris Humphries

18 weeks - Renee Zellweger and Kenny Chesney.

23 weeks - Drew Barrymore and Tom Green

7 months - Jennifer Lopez and Cris Judd

72 days or 72 weeks, 3 months or 3 years, 5 years or 15 years, we all get to a point where we '*see-finish*' our spouse. No spark. Nothing thrills us anymore. We get to a point where we get used to them or familiar with them and we begin to crave for some newness and freshness. It isn't necessarily always about what they have done or have not done. It's just the fact that they get old, you get bored; they get dry, you get tired.

When you've been with something long enough, it's expected that you become familiar with it. Reality is that you get used to it. The initial thrills and frills of it dissipate, the freshness wanes and our insatiable soul longs for another. It is natural. It is innate. It's us.

So I repeat, boredom happens to the best of us.

Why are we bored?

I believe I already answered that question. But, it bears mentioning again.

Sometimes boredom can make you feel choked, clogged, like you are stuck and you can't get out?

What gets us to that point?

1. Routine.
2. You want something better. You believe you deserve better and you deserve more.
3. Lack of exciting memories in your marriage.
4. Lack of communication. You stopped talking to each other about little and silly things. Gone were those days when you talked late into the night about sweet nothings and just giggled away time. Do you remember those days? Those days when nothing else mattered except her voice. Those days when nothing else was as important as being held in his arms. But now all your communication is about bills to be paid, family weddings to attend, in laws to visit, school runs to make, next certification to register for. You stopped playing and you know, deep down within you that your life didn't use to be like this.
5. No special time outside your relationship. No opportunity to hang out with your friends anymore. No occasion to lead a small group or teach a class or join some friends in planning a surprise party. Where will you find the time when you are married and are raising a child? You no longer go for events or shows because you tell yourself you have a home to run.

6. You have become so consumed with tomorrow that you are forgetting to enjoy today. You have become so inundated with the plans for the future that you forget to live in the moment. You are forgetting to breathe.

You are bored because you seek for some freshness and you can't find it in her. You long for some sparkle and he can't deliver (again). You've seen and explored all there is to him. You discover there is nothing more to discover about her. Nothing seems new anymore. And **new** is what you want.

See, the aroma of a fresh loaf is enticing (just as the stench of a stale loaf is repelling.) Your office secretary beams you a smile and your body responds – fresh loaf! Your boss commends your work with a firm handshake and your head spins – fresh loaf! And like a flash you ask yourself, when was the last time my husband appreciated anything I did? When was the last time my wife dressed this gorgeous. All of a sudden love turns to apathy. Spontaneity becomes routine. All of a sudden you can't stand him anymore. In an awkward twist you can't bear her anymore. The same things that drew you close; the very same things have become sources of intense irritation.

Let's take a trip down Hollywood lane.

Elizabeth Taylor got married eight times. Larry King, king of talk shows (radio and television), did it eight times too. Country singer, Kenny Rogers have had five. Ivana Trump was married to Donald Trump for fifteen years and is now single. She's been walked down the aisle five

times. Actress Lara Turner was married eight times. Donald Trump, Nicolas Cage, Pastor Chris Okotie (sorry, I had to squeeze him in) have done it three times. Kim Kardashian is on her 3rd. Jennifer Lopez and Drew Barymorre on their third. Halle Berry, Britney Spears, Will Smith running round two. The list is endless. And these are just those that made it official. What about those that have extramarital affairs? Let's not even go there.

We fail to realize that the new always gets old. What is new today will not be new tomorrow! So after you have the *new new*, what happens? How many girlfriends are you going to have? How many wives are you going to garner? How many times would you walk down the aisle?

The more reason why you feel stuck and suffocated. You wish you could get out but you understand you can't. Your faith does not permit you, society does not encourage you. But does society know how dreary your life has become. And does faith folks realize you've not gone out on a date with your spouse in one year?

So what do you do now that you are bored?

Here is the third installment, what do you do when you are bored?

What to do.

It's taken that we fell in love. It's taken that the chemistry, the attraction, was there and strong at the beginning when we were dating. There was increased energy, your heart raced just thinking about your love. You mused over her. You wanted to be with him all the time.

It is the in-love state.

The in-love state is a period we lavish each other with love and devise means of 'spoiling' each other with gifts. There's plenty of positive emotions towards each other and you go out of your way to care for them regardless of how inconveniencing such care could be. You were willing to sacrifice anything for your beloved. You saw everything through their eyes, you longed to stay together forever.

It's the in-love state.

But, the adrenalin rush of the in-love state subsides. The high we had during the in-love state has an expiry date. Gary Chapman says it lasts two years. So when eventually your exploded heart rate returns to mother-earth, you will have to ask yourself, what do you have left? You will have to make a decision if your roots have gone deep enough to grow a beautiful tree of love.

The in-love state gets us in but does not have sufficient to keep us in. It will take something higher than the initial excitement. It would take something greater than the primordial emotional high. It would take a mutual commitment and a joint decision.

So the in-love state is a *time of surplus*. By surplus, I mean a time where there is plenty of goodwill, abundant gifts (and the gifts didn't have to have any special occasion attached to it), profuse care, rich generosity.

You were constantly sending messages to each other, creating memories together, eating together, date nights, movie nights, unending love strolls, and sufficient acts of service, loads and loads of conversation. These are the things we do when we fall in love. It is a time of surplus.

In the days of surplus, a wise man saves. During the time of plenty, it is wise to save. What do I mean?

If we regard the in-love state as the time of surplus and we acknowledge that the in-love state has an expiry date. That implies that when the in-love state completes its term, a period of 'famine' follows. So if we save during the time of plenty, we will have something to fall back on during the time of famine. It was this strategy Joseph used in Egypt.

The question then will be how do you save during the in-love state?

Those acts of goodwill we displayed, the rich generosity, the profuse care, the incessant text messages and the loads and loads of words of affirmation, we must cast them in concrete. We must consciously make them habitual. We must make date nights and movie nights habitual. We must commit to keep doing them, keep finding new ways of doing them, keep tweaking, and keep revamping them.

Archive the surplus of goodwill during your in-love state. File them close to your heart so you stay committed to keep renewing them.

We must choose to commit to finding new ways of doing the things we did to get them at first. TD Jakes said, 'what they do to get you, they don't do to keep you.' Therein lies the answer to boredom.

You used to just share gist. Why did you stop?

You used to hang out together.

You used to share domestic works.

You used to make the effort to look more attractive? Why did you stop?

You used to make a dash at your phone when you heard her ring tone.

You used to sneak out of an executive meeting during your dating days just to say sweet nothings to her. Remember? What changed?

What are your 'used tos?' If you can find them you have found the way out of your boredom. Although that you find the way out isn't same as taking it. You take the way when you make a decision to start doing the very things you did at first.

So what are your *used-tos*?

Pick a sheet of paper and list them. List the various things you used to do for your spouse. You don't have to list the ones your spouse used to do for you. Just list yours. What made you stop doing them?

Because your gestures were not reciprocated? Because you felt they were not important? Why did you stop? That's a question only you can answer.

You can call your spouse right now and engage. You can make the U-turn right now, as in right now.

#Makethatcall. I challenge you to #makethatcall.

When I got married, ironing the clothes my wife and I wear to work was one of my duties. (what you could term one of my used-tos). I enjoyed and loved doing it. Come on, we were newly married and I was eager to impress. One day, while I was ironing, a thought flashed through my mind, and it was a simple question, 'for how long will you be doing this? Are you going to be doing this for the rest of your life?' First I waved it away with, I don't have to, we would soon get a maid and the responsibility would go to him/her. But then I stopped and gave it a serious consideration. I noticed my wife derived some pride in showing off that her clothes were pressed by her husband. The gesture made her feel real good. And for that singular reason, I made up my mind and told myself that I would continue to do it with or without a maid in the house.

We are six years now and I've pressed her clothes for that same number of years every morning she went to work.

Now, were there mornings I was upset with my wife. You bet! Plenty! But in that state of annoyance I still pressed her clothes for work. I pressed it clothe with my squeezed face and puffy lips. Why? Because I made a decision to do so. I committed to doing so, whether I feel like it or I don't. Where did I find the strength? Redemption. Redemption got me infused with the capability for a constant newness.

Now how do you think my wife feels going to work in that dress I ironed while she is upset with me or I am upset with her? I leave that to you to figure.

I believe that's the stuff vibrant marriages are made of. It's a decision to stay committed to love regardless of our unpredictable feelings. It's a commitment to always give the advantage and not seek to take the advantage. It's doing your part even if it's not reciprocated.

Even God gets bored with *same ol same ol*. The Bible says, ‘Sing to Him a NEW song,” God is thoroughly against the old! And then it goes further to say, “He has put a new song in my mouth.”

In another place, it says His mercies are NEW every morning. He daily loads us with NEW benefits. ‘I do a new thing..’ God is thoroughly against the old!

Take a journey back to when you first started and the first works you did for your spouse. Tweak them, revamp them, do an overhaul and restore the surplus goodwill displayed during the in-love state.

Boredom is when you are repetitive without being creative. It is when you are predictable without being exceptional. I can throw a surprise birthday party for my wife every year and each year she wouldn’t even know what is coming. It’s called designing new ways of making each other happy or feel good.

Can you enroll in some dance class together? Say salsa for example? Life is not about bills, bills and bills. Put some spice into it and explore new adventures. Your conversations don’t always have to be serious. Gossip once in a while, it’s your spouse, it’s allowed. And stop withholding the little little details of your day. Share them regardless.

Boredom's big cousin

One major thing that got us into a love relationship or marriage is that we chose to give our attention to another individual who eventually became our wife or husband. And by attention, I mean you chose one person amidst a myriad of ladies and men to send text messages to regularly, call regularly, give gifts to regularly, speak to regularly, take out regularly and love unconditionally. We gave our attention to this one person and this attention metamorphosed into the marriage we have today.

When we are bored, we stand the risk of carrying this **Attention** to someone else. This is how extra marital affairs begin.

It begins when we carry the Attention we first gave our spouse and we shower it on another who is not our spouse. If you check, adultery simply means, you are spending more time with someone else who isn't your spouse. And it's funny how you will not be doing anything different from what you did to your spouse, at first, with this person. It's the same thing you do; you send text messages to them regularly, call regularly, give gifts regularly, speak to regularly, take out regularly and promise to love unconditionally. The same Attention you deprive your spouse of, you now lavish on another soul because you told yourself you are bored.

Boredom's little cousin is Adultery. Call it Affair or a Fling, it does not reduce its fatal blow. And adultery is not until you sleep with another man or woman. If you find yourself flirting with another soul, enjoying their company more than your spouse's and giving Attention to them, you are already on the road. You need to slam on the break and STOP!

What are you going to do?

#makethatcall

#engage

And bring the spark back into your marriage.

The End