

APPENDIX A: Resources for a Student Boredom Conversation *

School mental health professionals and other educators can engage students in conversations about how they perceive and value their classes and school-related activities. This discussion is the first step to understanding boredom's sources and developing a response plan. Macklem (2015) provides a well-documented, practical resource for school mental health professionals' efforts to address students' boredom.¹ This appendix offers thematic areas and related questions to organize the exploration of a student's school boredom experiences.

Educators' General Orientations

These are general orientations to bring to the exploration with the student. Educators want a student to let them know when they feel bored. Help youths to recognize and accept these emotional experiences. Help the student evaluate and explore what they think provoked the bored feelings. As in any similar encounter, a school professional will want to use this moment as a psychoeducational learning opportunity.

General Boredom Exploration

An initial point of clarification is to establish that "boredom" is an accurate emotional term for students' experiences.

- Is boredom the best label?
- What other emotions might the student be feeling?
- Do other emotion labels more closely describe the student's experience?

School Boredom Exploration

When it is clear that boredom accurately describes a student's emotional experience, the next goal is to explore the boredom's meaning.

- Where did you feel bored?
- Did you feel other emotions?
- Is this a new or recent experience?
- How often do you feel bored and where?
- Is this a school-related experience (primarily)?

Review a list of the student's classes. Consider using a daily emotional log to help the student become aware of their bored emotional experiences.

- What emotions do they have in each class?
- What other emotions do they have in their classes?

Exploring Student Boredom Experiences

Explore how the student experiences boredom in their classes and school activities.

- What do you think about when feeling bored in class? (cognitive component)?
- When you feel bored in class, what do you want to do about it? (motivational component)?
- How does your body feel when bored in class? (physiological component).
- On a 1–10 scale, how strong is your boredom in classes?

List all the student's classes and explore these questions.

- Do you feel that you belong in this classroom?
- Do you find this class to be very pleasant?
- Do you have high energy in this class?
- Do you find that you just can't wait for this class period to end?
- Are your class assignments challenging?
- Are the class assignments interesting?
- Is the class subject matter interesting?
- What value and purpose do you place on taking this class?
- Is the teaching style in this class just about right for you?
- Do you get along with the teacher in this class?
- How do you know that the teacher in this class cares for you and the other students?
- Does the teacher in this class have high expectations for you?

Boredom Coping Questions

Explore what the student is doing with their boredom.

- Do you ask the teacher if you can do something else?
- Do you tell yourself to keep concentrating?
- Do you ask your teacher for more exciting tasks?
- Do you prepare for your next class or study for another subject?
- Do you make yourself aware of the importance of the class subject matter?
- Do you try to contact other classmates who are also bored?

Mind Wandering

Mind wandering might be one way for a student to cope with boredom.

- Do you have difficulty maintaining focus on simple or repetitive work?
- While reading, do you find you haven't been thinking about the text and must reread it?
- Do you do things without paying full attention?
- Do you find yourself listening with one ear, thinking about something else at the same time?
- Does your mind wander during class teacher lectures or other presentations?

Meaning and Purpose Questions

Boredom could be related to a student's sense of engagement or life purpose. Exploring a student's values, passions, and purpose could provide ideas for positively coping with boredom and focusing on personal growth.

- In general, do you feel a lack of stimulation or a lack of interest??
- Do you feel you have little control over your life or what you are doing right now?
- Do you have enough interesting things to do to fill your time?
- Do you have a lot of energy but don't know what to do with it?
- Do you feel overloaded by school assignments and expectations?

* Furlong, M. J., Smith, D. C., Springer, T., & Dowdy, E. (2021). Bored with school! Bored with life? Well-being characteristics associated with a school boredom mindset. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 5(1), 42–64.
<https://www.covitalityucsb.info/ewExternalFiles/10.%20Furlong%20et%20al%20>

¹ Macklem, G. L. (2015). *Boredom in the classroom: Addressing student motivation, self-regulation, and engagement in learning*. Springer International Publishing.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-13120-7>