

Road Podcast
“Dealing with”
boredom



BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

**6 Minute English Dealing with
boredom**

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Rob: Hello I'm Rob. Welcome to 6 Minute English. I'm joined today by Finn. Hello Finn.

Finn: Hi Rob. You know, I'm happy you called me to present this programme with you because I was there by my desk feeling a bit bored (*yawns loudly*).

Rob: Great **yawn**, Finn! A yawn, of course, is that typical reaction of someone who is bored.

Finn: Yeah, it's when you open your mouth wide and take some air in and slowly out.

Rob: Okay. Let's make this a programme all about boredom, shall we? And I'll start by **stimulating** your imagination.

Finn: Thank you, but how are you going to make me excited and interested in something, Rob?

Rob: How about I challenge you to a question you might not know the answer to?

Finn: Okay, well, you can try. Go on then.

Rob: Well, I know you like the theatre.

Finn: I do. But it has to be an exciting play or I get **restless**.

Rob: Restless, you mean unable to sit still because you get bored or worried even. Okay. I wonder how you'd feel watching the longest continuous play recorded?

Finn: That's quite an offer. What do you mean?

Rob: According to the Guinness Book of Records, the longest continuous dramatic performance was held in New Jersey, in the US, in 2010. But

do you know how long the cast
for The Bald Soprano by Eugene
Ionesco, was on stage for?

Was it for about:

- a) 8 hours
- b) 17 hours
- c) 23 hours

Finn: Wow! They're all pretty long. I'll
say b) 17 hours, Rob.

Rob: Goodness! Right. Okay. I'll let
you know the answer by the
end of the programme. Now,
let's talk more about boredom.
I think this is a feeling we have
to learn how **to cope with**.

Finn: Yes, we have to learn to deal with this situation successfully – to cope with it. But people often feel they want to change their life, to change their job. They might feel **stuck in a rut**.

Rob: That's a good phrase - stuck in a rut. So you mean you've become too fixed in one kind of job?

Finn: Yes. You know Rob, even I sometimes dream of something a bit more exciting like being a professional diver or maybe even a pilot of a really fast plane.

Rob: Well, guess what: even pilots get bored, you know?

Finn: Not when they are flying anyway.

Rob: Wrong. When they're up in the air!

Finn: No way! Really? I don't believe you!

Rob: Well, Missy Cummings, an American, was a fighter pilot. Listen to the phrasal verb she uses meaning to stop being bored, at least for a while. Is there ever time for a fighter pilot to get bored?

Missy Cummings , former fighter pilot:

*Oh my gosh, sure, for the same reasons that commercial pilots get bored. These fighter jets are very automated when it comes to just holding altitude and heading. So you turn everything in autopilot and I probably listened to more Oprah Winfrey TV shows on the highfrequency radios... And so you get good about using the technology to figure out how **to stave off** that boredom.*

Finn: Ah, so she listened to a show hosted by the American presenter Oprah Winfrey on the radio to stave off her boredom. Now, to stave off means to stop or to keep an unpleasant feeling away. In this case she means boredom.

Rob: Yes, indeed.

Rob: But some experts think there's something good about feeling bored.

Finn: Really?

Rob: Let's hear what Tiffany Watt-Smith has to say. She works for the Centre for the History of Emotions at the Queen Mary University of London. Pay attention to the word she uses to describe what boredom does to people.

Tiffany Watt-Smith, Queen Mary University of London:

*On the one hand people are worried about being under-occupied and bored. On the other there's a set of anxieties about us having any more downtime, you know. We can constantly check our phones at the bus stop. Everything is to be filled and what does that do to our minds? I think boredom is a very useful emotion. It's an emotion which **spurs** people **on** to change something about their environment. If you're bored that gives rise to creativity.*

Finn: So boredom spurs people on to change something. To spur on means to stimulate or to encourage someone to do something.

Rob: So what are you going to do, Finn? How will you change your life?

Finn: Change my life? Okay. Two things. The first one is: I want to know if I got that question right!

Rob: Well I said at the beginning of the programme that the longest continuous dramatic performance was held in New Jersey, US, in 2010. And I asked you how long was the cast on stage for to play The Bald Soprano by Eugene Ionesco.

Finn: Yes. The options were 8 hours, 17 hours and 23 hours, I think. And I said 17.

Was I right?

Rob: You were not!

Finn: Oh, no!

Rob: It was even longer.

Finn: Wow! 23!

Rob: According to the Guinness Book of Records, the play lasted 23 hours, 33 minutes and 54 seconds. It was achieved by The 27 O'Clock Players who performed The Bald Soprano

at Belmar, New Jersey, USA, on 27 July 2010. Anyway Finn, what's the second thing you're going to do to stave off your boredom?

Finn: You know what, Rob? I'm going to book myself a fantastic holiday! Maybe I could start with a visit to Patagonia in Argentina to see the penguins...

Rob: Yeah, it sounds very exciting. But before you head off to Patagonia, could you remind us of some of the English words we've heard today?

Finn: We heard:
yawn
stimulating
restless

to cope with
stuck in a rut
to stave off
to spur on

Rob: Thanks Finn. That's it for this programme. I hope you didn't find it boring.

Finn: Not at all. I loved it!

Rob: Please join us soon again for 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English.

Both: Bye.

Vocabulary and definitions

to yawn	to open your mouth wide and take air in and out slowly; usually a sign of boredom or tiredness
stimulating	making someone excited and interested in something
restless	unable to sit still because you are bored or worried
to cope with	to deal with a situation successfully

stuck in a rut	become too fixed in one kind of job or situation in life
to stave off	to stop or keep away an unpleasant feeling
to spur on	to encourage someone to do something

Road Podcast

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