

Jill Baughan

TRANSCRIPT FOR PODCAST EPISODE 109-BE BORED

I'm Jill Baughan, and you're listening to the podcast called Find Joy...No Matter What.

This is Episode 109.

Hey friend, do you know someone who's going through a tough time right now? And maybe you'd love to be an encouragement to them, but you aren't sure how? If so, I have something for you that can help with that. Just click on the link in the show notes, and you'll get a free gift from me: ideas for making a joy box that will definitely brighten the day--and maybe even the life--of someone you care about. And--bonus--getting that little bit of goodness will automatically sign you up to receive these podcast episodes in your inbox every week. You just might need a boost yourself.

Because if you're in a tough place right now, your joy may seem like it's hiding--or gone.

I understand. But it's still there, I promise, just waiting to be resurrected. And this podcast is designed to help you do just that...no matter what else is going on in your life.

For just a few minutes each week, I'll tell you a story--one that might inspire a way to uncover a piece of joy you've been looking for. Then, we'll consider how it could speak to your life, because even though you'll hear quite a few of my stories during our time together, I believe you'll find your own in every one of mine.

Finally, I'll offer a benediction to send you into your day--or into your night.

So. If you're up for doing joy shots with a friend today...have a listen.

(Feeling Happiness gradually fades.)

Boredom has a bad rap, and I understand why.

Honestly, who wants to be bored? Who wants to see a boring movie, read a boring book, be a boring person? Yawn. Not me.

Most people I know are not bored for lack of something to do. It's often more a matter of situational boredom. Stuff we have to do that's boring.

For instance,

Waiting: Most people are not fond of waiting in lines. Waiting in a doctor's office. Waiting

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for a table at a restaurant. Waiting anywhere. Especially if the wait is unexpected. After a long, unexpected wait haven't you ever said, "Well, there's an hour of my life I won't get back"?

Or how about tasks we find boring, like folding laundry or cleaning house, or walking on a treadmill or attending a meeting or a class whose content you find dreadfully dull, taught by someone whose gifts clearly do not include enchanting an audience with verbal discourse?

Or--many of us have experience with working a job we find boring.

Many years ago, when Ben and I were first married, I got a job at what was then the Virginia Department of Highways and Transportation--otherwise known as the Highway Department. I was fresh out of college, and looking toward grad school, but I needed to be making some money first, so I accepted a position that was not exactly in line with my "strengths."

I worked in the Right of Way Division. When a highway was built across someone's property and left an odd parcel of land on either side, it was our division's job to try to sell that parcel to the adjacent landowner. I was what they call a "technician"--someone who checked the parcel's location and measurements, and filled in the blanks on the deed that was being drawn up for the sale.

To say that I found this work uninteresting was an understatement--largely because I was terrible at it. My measurements were often inaccurate, and when proofing deeds, my mind wandered all over the place.

Every morning I would trot into the office, say hi to everyone, sit down at my desk, look at the clock and get terribly sad because I knew I had to stay there, unable to escape, for nine hours.

I was desperate to add some spice to this work life that I found so uninspiring. And, believe it or not, it was that boredom produced some of the most joyful moments of my work life ever.

Part of this was due to the fact that I adored my coworkers, who were always up for a little fun. So I felt compelled, in that unstimulated space in my brain, to create a little amusement, doing things like putting myself in charge of planning office parties, sending notes, drawing cartoons and sneaking into the boss's office with a coworker and recording "My Girl" on his Dictaphone. (Yes, Dictaphone, youngsters. A dictation machine. If you are not old, it's worth looking up.) Before long, the veteran employees decided they could get away with playing a few jokes too, like sending me up to the 15th floor for "two rolls of right

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of way” and to the 16th floor for a plat that showed the dimensions of a place called “Donald Duck’s Landing. “

I fell for it. I fell for all of it, over and over. I am positive that every time I left the room to dutifully follow their instructions, they were all on the floor, laughing. I was so easily taken in...always have been.

This is probably why friends in college once “made” two “books” about me and titled them *Gullible’s Travels* and *Innocence: A Broad*. But I digress.

Despite the repeated incidents of minor humiliation for me, the shenanigans inspired by our boredom provided some mighty fine entertainment.

NOW. I UNDERSTAND I was not the model employee, and I eventually saw the wisdom of getting into another line of work.

For all the hours I spent at the Highway Department not doing my job, I--now older and wiser--offer my humble apologies to the taxpayers of Virginia

I did learn, however, that boredom was the mother of creativity--and all kinds of ways to add joy to the day.

I am so glad we didn’t have the ability to scroll on screens back then. Because I fear I would have been scrolling secretly and mindlessly, all day long, without the benefit of the glory that can emerge from a bored mind.

You know what I’m talkin’ ‘bout, right?

When your mind is going numb, it’s only natural to search for something to entertain it, and for many of us, the phone is so very convenient for such a thing, and it’s no wonder. That’s the behavior that the technology is built to trigger.

Former Google designer Tristan Harris said this: *“If I’m Netflix or Facebook or Snapchat, I have literally a thousand engineers whose job it is to get more attention from you. I’m very good at this, and I don’t ever want you to stop. And the CEO of Netflix said, “Our biggest competitors are Facebook, YouTube and sleep. There’s a million places to spend your attention and there’s a war going on to get it.”*

If you don’t decide how you’re going to use technology, the platforms will decide for you. Ask yourself, “What am I really looking for?” If it’s to check email, that’s fine, do and be done. But if it’s to distract yourself from doing the hard work that comes with deeper thinking, take a break. Stare out the window. And know that by doing nothing, you are actually being your

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most productive and creative self. It might feel uncomfortable at first, but boredom truly can lead to brilliance.

Writer Jamie Ducharme tells about Sandi Mann, a senior psychology lecturer at the University of Central Lancashire in the U.K. Mann is the author of *The Upside of Downtime: Why Boredom Is Good*, and a proponent of embracing the emotion, negative connotations and all.

She says, Here's why being bored can be a good thing for your mind, imagination and productivity, and how to do it right.

First, boredom sparks creativity.

At its core, boredom is “a search for neural stimulation that isn’t satisfied,” Mann says. “If we can’t find that, our mind will create it.” As demonstrated by the new study and plenty others before it, boredom can enable creativity and problem-solving by allowing the mind to wander and daydream. “There’s no other way of getting that stimulation, so you have to go into your head,” Mann says. You may be surprised by what you come up with when you do.

Furthermore, boredom is good for your mental health.

Daydreaming can be “quite a respite” and provide a brief escape from day-to-day life, Mann says. But it’s also beneficial to simply step away from screens, work and other stressors long enough to feel bored. Studies have shown, for example, that modern tools including work emails, social media and dating apps can strain mental health — so taking a break can be a valuable opportunity to recharge.

But it’s important to know how to be bored the right way.

Mann says it’s important not to conflate boredom with relaxation. A purposefully tranquil activity, such as yoga or meditation, likely doesn’t meet the definition of trying and failing to find stimulation.

To tap into true boredom, she suggests picking an activity that requires little or no concentration — like walking a familiar route, swimming laps or even just sitting with your eyes closed — and simply letting your mind wander, without music or stimulation to guide it.

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It's also crucial to unplug during this time, Mann says. Our cultural attachment to our phones, is paradoxically both destroying our ability to be bored, and preventing us from ever being truly entertained.

"We're trying to swipe and scroll the boredom away, but in doing that, we're actually making ourselves more prone to boredom, because every time we get our phone out we're not allowing our mind to wander and to solve our own boredom problems," Mann says, adding that people can become addicted to the constant dopamine hit of new and novel content that phones provide. "Our tolerance for boredom just changes completely, and we need more and more to stop being bored."

So, she says, next time you find yourself in line at the grocery store, in a tedious meeting or killing time in a waiting room, resist the urge to scroll. You're bound to get bored — and your brain, mood and work performance just might improve.

And so, my friend,

May you embrace the space in your mind.

And may you resist the temptation to automatically, even frantically, fill it up.

And as you will yourself to just be... And your eyes to just observe...and give your brain permission to go wherever the heck it wants, may you discover the unexpected joy that comes from being bored.

Thanks so much for joining me.

If you know people who need to take a break from engaging in obsessive, automatic distraction, I invite you to share this podcast with them, and subscribe yourself on iTunes, or wherever you listen to podcasts. Or you can go to my website at jillbaughan.com, click on a podcast episode and sign up to receive episodes in your inbox. Just don't miss an episode, because I so look forward to being with you again soon.

Go on. Let yourself get bored, my friend. And always, always remember: if you go looking for joy, you'll most likely find it.

Till next time...

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NOTES:

Make a Joy Box for Someone You Care About: <https://jilbaughan.com/joy-box>

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