

BOREDOM IN RETIREMENT YEARS

- Those who come to counselling because they are bored in their retirement and don't know what to do are usually of two types:
 - Those who have recently retired and are in a time of adjustment
 - Those who are experiencing a loss of meaning
- For those in adjustment:
 - It takes time, even up to a year or more, to shift one's inner compass from 40 years of work week routines. Be patient and kind to yourself. But keep moving and exploring options.
 - Retirement brings with it a change of identity. Throughout your adult years your work and/or raising a family provided a large part of your identity. Once that is gone you have to reconstruct who you are. You probably had activities that you did in your free time that you were looking forward to spending more time with during retirement, but these were diversions from your responsibilities, not the main source of your identity. I often hear that in retirement people lose interest in their hobbies. This is because they are trying to form an identity around something they previously thought was a diversion, therefore a triviality, therefore they are worthless and trivial.
- For those experiencing a loss of meaning:
 - This is when a person gets stuck in the adjustment. In your responsible adult years, you were pressured to achieve. And not necessarily in a negative way. For instance, "I need to work hard so that I can make more money to provide for my family." Studies show that unless this emphasis is balanced with an "awakened" orientation, depression ensues. "Awakened" here means receiving life and feeling gratitude that one is alive and experiencing life. With retirement the achievement orientation becomes less meaningful, and the awakened orientation becomes more meaningful. If this transition hasn't occurred and the older person feels that they need to achieve, and there's nothing to achieve, then what's the purpose of life? What's the purpose of doing anything?
 - There is also the issue of "purposeful activity". This doesn't mean that you have to be productive in your old age, but that you are doing things for a reason. You can lie in bed until noon, and that can lead to depression. But not if there is a good reason for it. It is said that Mark Twain rarely got out of bed before noon, but that this was some of his most productive creative thinking time. Purposeful activity can be something that contributes to society, like volunteering, or it can be something that nurtures your health and growth. Doing crossword puzzles could be a meaningless waste of time, or it can be a time of mental exercise.